

# Wild 124


30 YEARS OF WILDERNESS ADVENTURE HERITAGE

THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM  
NSW'S GREEN GULLY TRACK  
CANN RIVER BUSHWALK  
PROFILE: MICHAEL COLLIE  
WOMEN'S PACK SURVEY  
TRACK NOTES TO THE  
VICTORIAN HIGH COUNTRY  
THE OFF-TRACK DILEMMA

## The Tarkine Land of Sky *and* Sea



AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE



## Departments

- 4 From the Editor**  
Infinite idiocy in the Tarkine

- 6 Wildfire**  
30 years of Wild, tracks and canyon closures

- 9 Wild Shot**  
Under the Rainbow

- 10 Info**  
The North Face 100, myrtle rust hits Australian national parks and more

- 13 All Things Great and Small**  
Swamp Antechinus

- 14 Green Pages**  
Woodchips for electricity, trouble in the Tarkine and updates from around the land

- 20 Wildlife**  
Quentin Chester takes to the water

- 22 Profile**  
Simon Madden talks to one of Wild's founders, Michael Collie

- 40 Folio**  
Janusz Molinski captures the magic of the High Country

- 58 Track Notes**  
Glenn van der Knijff outlines a stunning three-day circuit through the Victorian High Country

- 64 The Nature of the Beast**  
Steve Van Dyck uncovers some chilling facts about hare-wallabies

- 66 Gear Survey**  
Nodene Proud surveys women's rucksacks for multiday walking

- 72 Wild Diary**  
The heads-up on upcoming events

- 73 Equipment**  
A truckload of new kit for gear junkies

- 75 Reviews**  
Three new walking guides and a book on Wilsons Promontory

- 78 Portrait**  
Our photographer Craig Ingram meets guidebook legend John Chapman



## Features

### 24 Return to Jerusalem

Mike Marlyn revisits Tasmania's Walls of Jerusalem in winter

### 30 The Land of Sky and Sea

Rob Taylor walks the Tarkine coastline in Tasmania

### 36 Gorge Raiders

Dave Cauldwell explores the Green Gully Track, a new bushwalk in the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park in NSW

### 44 Cann Do Attitude

Hugh de Kretser walks from the Cann River Hotel, down the Cann River to the sea

### 48 The Off-track Dilemma

Bron Willis considers the pros and cons of off-track bushwalking

### 52 Cooking with Spices

The second instalment in Andrew Davison's series on food for lightweight bushwalking

### 54 Trekking Training

More training advice from Alex Shirley, this time on strengthening your shoulders and back

### 56 Up Close and Personal

Craig Ingram outlines a professional approach to macro photography

## Wild

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### WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



Cover Leila McMahon-Kunta, Bob McMahon and Rob Taylor (on right) walking down the Tarkine Coast, Ross Taylor

Bob McMahon giving grandson Lawry the first class treatment across an unknown river in the Tarkine, Tasmania (see the story on page 30). Taylor

**'Paddling down the river now it is hard to imagine it underwater, that so much magic and mystery could have been sunk in a watery grave to generate power that wasn't needed.'**



## Infinite Idiocy in the Tarkine

In April I paddled down the Franklin River in Tasmania, following its dark, mysterious tannin-stained waters from the Lyell Highway down to its confluence with the Gordon. It is a remarkable river that I have wanted to paddle for a long time, both as a homage to the beauty of the river and the passion of the environmentalists who fought so hard to save it, many of whom are still readers and contributors to this magazine today.

Paddling down the river now it is hard to imagine it underwater, that so much magic and mystery could have been sunk in a watery grave to generate power that wasn't needed. We owe a great debt to those who fought for its continuance in its present state.

But there are new battles to be won.

Last year I wrote an editorial about a walk I did down the Tarkine coast and the damage caused by four-wheel drivers. In this issue I have written a feature story about that walk (on page 30), inspired by the news that there are bigger and more immediate threats to the Tarkine, this time from mining.

Unfortunately, the Tarkine no longer has the protection of the emergency heritage listing it received during the 'Road to Nowhere' debacle, because the Federal Environment Minister, Tony Burke, has allowed it to lapse. This means that all future mining proposals for the Tarkine region won't have to be assessed against the area's heritage values. The ending of the temporary listing means that approval of any mining projects is almost certain. To make matters worse, this week we found out that a Senate pledge in 2007 to review the world heritage values of the Tarkine – a pledge that was backed by both sides of politics – was never

commissioned. There are suggestions that Malcolm Turnbull, who was the Federal Environment Minister at the time, may have misled parliament about ordering the review.

There is a very famous quote from Albert Einstein: 'Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe.' To those of us who place a high value on wilderness areas, the almost limitless greed for minerals at the expense of our wild places seems infinitely stupid. Whether it is the Tarkine, the Kimberley or Kakadu, it seems that if there is something worth money there we will do whatever we can to dig it up, regardless of the long-term cost to the environment. Worst of all, most of this wealth is siphoned off into private pockets: all it took for the mining industry to save itself an estimated \$60 to \$100 billion in future taxes was a \$22 million advertising campaign to change public opinion and put the wind up our gutless government.

The Tarkine is clearly an area that has natural heritage values worth protecting. Anyone who visits the area is immediately struck by its incredible beauty. What is also striking is that little is being done to protect this precious asset, that there is a failure by our governments to conceive of its value beyond the raw dollar values of its minerals or price per tonne of woodchips.

Nearly 30 years ago environmentalists fought and won a massive battle for the future of the Franklin. Now a little further north, the Tarkine, an area with similar natural heritage values stands threatened. What is our generation going to do?

Ross Taylor

[ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au](mailto:ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au)

### Changes

In the rush to get the last issue of *Wild* off to the printers we failed to mention that there has been few important staffing changes here at Prime Creative Media.

In particular, we would like to say a big thank you and goodbye to the long-time subscriptions manager of *Wild*, Tony Cox. Many of you will have spoken to Tony on the phone or via email over the years in relation to subscriptions and will know from personal experience that Tony took real pride in his job and ensured that everyone got their magazines despite the occasional lapses of Australia Post. We would like to wish Tony all the best with his future endeavours at Environment Victoria.

At the same time, we would also like to welcome our new subscriptions manager, Chelsea Eaw. Chelsea has previously worked for *Wild* as an intern over the last year, and she is also taking over as the new Green Pages editor. Our previous Green Pages editor, Sally Sherwin, has decided to start a PhD – so we would like to wish Sally all the best with her studies and thank her for all her help with the Green Pages.

For anyone who has information relevant to subscriptions or the Green Pages, feel free to contact Chelsea on [chelsea.eaw@primecreative.com.au](mailto:chelsea.eaw@primecreative.com.au)  
RT



# Wild

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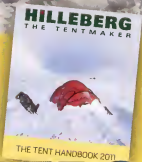
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Issue 123, May-June 2011

### 30 YEARS OF WILD

I am writing in response to your editorial in *Wild* no 121, in which you asked to hear from people who have been with *Wild* since the early days.

I discovered *Wild* rather late, but nonetheless have a complete collection dating from *Wild* no 15. As a lover of the Great Australian Outdoors – forced by circumstances (politically!) to live elsewhere – each issue of *Wild* has come to me (never mind the cliché, it's very true) like a breath of fresh air. Also helpful in this regard were its sister magazines, *Walkabout*, *Geo* and the *Australian Museum Magazine/Australian Natural History/Nature Australia* (why can't they let a good name be) – all, sadly (and in the latter case unnecessarily), defunct. Gone the way of the dodo. Under the amazing and energetic leadership of Chris Baxter, *Wild* was always a stimulating read, and his stance on green issues much appreciated. Let the good work continue.

In the sixties and seventies I saw as much of Australia as opportunity permitted. Inspired by the writings of pioneering explorers and naturalists such as Charles Barrett, Arthur Groom, Noel Monkman and Harry Frauca, I travelled the bush in search of its fabulous animals and plants, many of which I dreamed about during my school days in damp, grey Pommeryland. I was also fortunate to encounter some legendary Australians, including Jeff Carter, Vincent Serventy, Michael Sharland and David Fleay – who recounted with relish the occasion when the last Thylacine (Tassie tiger) in captivity bit him on the bum, in 1930. On two trips to Tassie in search of the near-mythical beast I did, in fact, have some success – finding numerous skins and mounted species in museums – but none alive and well in the bush, alas. In addition I received invaluable assistance from a certain Bob Brown, in the days before the Franklin River dam campaign.

Like a glutton I sated my appetite for wild places; ascending the heights; savouring with joy vast, sun-soaked, wide open spaces; descending into dank or dusty depths of

bat-filled caves; dancing under waterfalls; donning mask and snorkel to come eye-to-eye with the denizens of creeks and coral reefs; and relishing the unbelievable variety of Australia's native woodlands, too often disparagingly dismissed as 'scrub'. I recall the near-ecstasy of finding my first Indigenous 'cave' paintings of red hands in the Blue Mountains, and the rage engendered by the finding of similar creations defaced by graffiti in the Mootwingee Ranges.

Alas, it can be a great mistake to return to such haunts in later years. With the image in my mind of a magical track, barely discernible in the moonlight, meandering through verdant unspoiled bushland, I recently found myself confronted by a virtual motorway, seemingly designed for wheelchair-racing, and bushfire-safe no doubt, with signposts everywhere. I found this quite shattering. All the wildness, mystery and sense of adventure had been excised as if with a scalpel. I dislike preaching, but in an over-populated world, Australia's wild places are an increasingly rare and very valuable resource, and need to be safeguarded from without and within.

David Yendall  
Bedfordshire, United Kingdom

### THE DEATH OF THE TRACK?

I was interested to read your piece about over-engineered tracks in the latest *Wild*. My least favourite track in Adelaide is so far just this reason. The Waterfall Gully to Mt Lofty track has been engineered to within an inch of its life. It's still a heart-thumping climb, but it is, by now, a totally bitumen track with weekend traffic like Pitt St (or Collins St) at peak hour (Adelaide's peak minute doesn't compare), and with most of the startled wildlife running for their lives from the joggers, lycra and bottled water. Luckily for me, just one kilometre down the road are the lovely Woolshed, Chambers Gully and Long Ridge tracks, all of which are proper bush tracks, with slightly gentler climbs, much softer on the ankles and knees, and with a permanent display of koalas and kangaroos. Fortunately the lycra-clad hordes seem blissfully unaware of these gems that they pass on their way to the most popular track in the Adelaide Hills. May it ever be so.

Judy Szekeres  
North Terrace, SA

### CANYON CLOSURES

On looking through the upcoming edition of the *Canyons near Sydney* booklet I was struck by the number of canyons where access has been adversely affected in recent years.

In the year 2000 the Wollemi Wilderness Area was proclaimed, and a barrier was installed on the Hole-in-the-Wall access road.

This affected access to such classic canyons as Banks, Fortitude, Nosedive, Bubble-Bath, Bjelke's Mind, Bridge and Luna Parks canyons and many more – to such an extent that these canyons are seldom attempted any more, and the old access tracks have almost disappeared. The restrictions imposed by the proclamation also affected access to Heart Attack, Spiral, Surefire, Galah and Close canyons – all these canyons were previously popular but are now seldom attempted because of the long walks involved.

The closure of the Mount Cameron Fire Trail at the same time stopped access to Thunderstorm and Contradiction canyons, and other canyons near Mount Cameron.

Recently access has been affected at Mount Tomah because a private property owner has developed his building site. This has made it much more difficult to gain access to such classic canyons as Claustral Canyon, Thunder Canyon, Ranon Canyon and Gaping Gully.

In addition, access is still severely restricted to large parts of the Northern Wollemi National Park, where canyons such as Midwinter Canyon, Cavenham Canyon, Blackboard Canyon and Mr Squiggles are almost impossible to reach and at best incur the wrath of local farmers.

Eleven years ago the canyons of the Blue Mountains were relatively accessible and the sport of canyoning was enjoyed by a large body of enthusiasts. Now the sport is in the doldrums because access has been denied.

Some people say 'If you want to do a canyon, then make the effort needed'. But most canyoners like to drive up from Sydney, do a canyon in one day, and drive home. The restrictions have meant that people just do not bother. They stay home and watch TV.

Parks looks after our canyons for the good of the people. They must improve access to the canyons. If this requires legislation to alter the boundaries of the Wilderness Areas then surely this must be done. As a minimum the Hole-in-the-Wall track must be extended.

Rick Jamieson  
Bowen Mountain, NSW

Reader's letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, 11-15 Buckhurst St, South Melbourne, Vic 3205 or email [ross.taylor@primemcreative.com.au](mailto:ross.taylor@primemcreative.com.au)

### Corrections and amplifications

In the last issue of *Wild* we incorrectly listed Macpac's children's sleeping bag, the Escapee, as the Escapee. We should also have mentioned that it is 133 centimetres plus 20 centimetres for the hood – an important detail. In the same issue, in the pack survey, the Macpac Cascade is the only canvas pack to use organically grown cotton from fair trade growers.

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# Under the Rainbow



**Photographer Troy Mattingley writes:** *I was in need of a stretch while driving back to the reality of Christchurch. I had just spent a week soaking up the last of summer at the idyllic rock climbing venue, Paynes Ford (at the top of New Zealand's South Island), so I pulled in to check out Maruia Falls (which turns out was formed with the help of a 7.8 earthquake in 1929). In the carpark I noticed the giveaway signs of a kayaker's vehicle. Hoping to catch one of these adrenaline junkies throwing themselves off the ten-metre high falls I grabbed my camera and rushed down to the water's edge. Everything from there just fell into place.*

By submitting a *Wild Shot* you can win a superb camera bag from Kata, the Ultra-Light Bumblebee-222 UL, RRP \$450. To be eligible for the prize send your image to [ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au](mailto:ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au). We are after any outdoor shots that are humorous, inspiring, spectacular or all three.





## The 2011 The North Face 100

IN MID MAY SPANISH ENDURANCE runner Kilian Jornet won this year's The North Face 100 in a record time of 9 hours, 19 minutes, 6 seconds. Jornet maintained an impressive average speed of 11 kilometres per hour over the hilly 100-kilometre course that winds its way through the Blue Mountains. Jornet was closely followed home by Frenchman Francois D'Heane, who finished in 9 hours, 24 minutes, 33 seconds, while South African runner, Ryan Sandes, finished 30 minutes later in 9 hours, 54 minutes, 57 seconds.

The first woman home was Australian endurance runner and rogaining champion, Julie Quinn, who smashed the previous race record (which she also held), beating a strong field of local and overseas entrants. She eclipsed her 2009 record by more than 30 minutes in a time of 11 hours, 39 minutes, 7 seconds. Quinn was very closely followed home by internationals Nerea Martinez (Spain) and Jen Segger (Canada) in 11 hours, 39 minutes, 55 seconds and 12 hours, 1 minute, 8 seconds respectively.

The 23-year-old Jornet is something of an endurance wunderkind, winning not only many of the world's endurance footraces, but also being a super talented ski mountaineer with multiple world titles to his name.

Last year's winner and Blue Mountains' local, Andrew Lee – who previously held the course record jointly with Stuart Gibson in a time of 9 hours, 54 minutes, 19 seconds – pushed hard early but faded in the second half of the race to finish 43rd.

This year all 850 places in the race sold out within two weeks, with 510 runners completing the course over what was an extremely cold weekend. To read more results visit [thenorthface.com.au/100](http://thenorthface.com.au/100)



Last year's winner of The North Face 100, Andrew Lee, running with this year's winner, Spanish runner Kilian Jornet. Mark Watson/Incite Images

## Myrtle Rust found in Queensland's national parks

THE PLANT DISEASE MYRTLE RUST has recently been discovered in two of Queensland's national parks, Lamington and Kondalilla. Myrtle rust affects the Myrtaceae family of plants and is considered a very serious threat to Australian forests as about 70 to 80 per cent of our native trees belong to this family. In Queensland alone the family accounts for 601 native species, including eucalypts,

paperbarks, bottlebrushes, tea trees, lilly pillies and water gums. The rust particularly affects young plants and can stunt their growth or even kill them.

The disease was only discovered in Australia in December last year, but scientists suspect it has been in Australia for around a year, quickly spreading from NSW along the coast up to Queensland. It was first discovered in a cut flower growing facility in NSW, where it was probably brought in with imported flowers.

Myrtle rust is easily detected, the NSW Primary Industries website describes it thus: 'Myrtle Rust is distinctive in that it produces masses of powdery bright yellow or orange-yellow spores on infected plant parts. It infects leaves of susceptible plants producing spore-filled lesions on young actively growing leaves, shoots, flower buds and fruits. Leaves may become buckled or twisted and may die as a result of infection. Sometimes these infected spots are surrounded by a purple ring. Older lesions may contain dark brown spores. Infection on highly susceptible plants may result in plant death.'

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Myrtle rust is easily spread by bushwalkers, so people who are walking in areas where the disease is suspected are asked to clean all their equipment, clothing and particularly hats before venturing into the bush.

If a site is discovered, don't touch it but photograph the affected plants and report the location immediately to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881.



A distinctive outbreak of myrtle rust on a willow myrtle. Louise Morin

## Pole to Pole update

THOSE WHO READ ABOUT Pat Farmer's epic Pole to Pole Run in the last issue will be pleased to hear that he has completed the first stage of the run/ski, having skied from the North Pole down through the Arctic Circle and is, as we write, not far from Montreal in Canada.

The original plan for the Pole to Pole Run had been to run down the West Coast of the US, but Farmer changed his mind after deciding that running down the more populated East Coast would be more beneficial to his goal of raising \$100 million for the Red Cross.

The first stage involved skiing – along with Australian polar expert Eric Phillips and two others – from the North Pole to Canada's Ward Hunt Island, a distance of 790 kilometres, a journey they completed in 40 days.

Having left the subzero temperatures of the Arctic Circle, Farmer is now having to cope with the hot conditions of the North American summer.

To find out more about Farmer's adventure and to see up to the minute updates on his progress on Google Maps, visit [poletopolerun.com](http://poletopolerun.com)



Pat Farmer manhandling his sled across the Arctic. Courtesy Pole to Pole

## The Rescue Month

APRIL IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE CRUELLEST month, but this year May seems to be the one punishing bushwalkers, with a number of rescues occurring around the land.

In early May on the Larapinta Trail a 60-year-old Norwegian walker set off his EPIRB after getting lost in steep country near Hugh Gorge. Apparently he came close to drowning after swimming across a waterhole with his pack in tow. Further confusion occurred before he was found after he switched off his EPIRB to conserve batteries. Eventually he

was helicoptered out only suffering from mild hypothermia.

On almost the same day in Tasmania three bushwalkers were rescued from Leven Canyon on the Penguin – Cradle Track by helicopter, after setting off an EPIRB. Reports indicate that the Penguin – Cradle Track has been badly affected by recent flood damage, which has made some sections of the walk extremely dangerous and close to impassable. The walkers were on the fourth day of the walk when they decided it was too dangerous

to continue or return back across the country they had already negotiated.

A couple of days later in the Victorian Alps, a 30-year-old walker on the Australian Alps Walking Track was rescued near Mt Shillinglaw. He set off his EPIRB after getting disoriented in extremely cold and foggy conditions and was found the next day by police. Police said the walker was experienced and well-prepared and did the right thing in the circumstances.



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# Allie Pepper summits Everest

IN THE LAST ISSUE WE reported that Allie Pepper was attempting Mt Everest, the world's highest peak, without oxygen, in May. Well, now we can happily report that she succeeded in her mission on 12 May, accompanied by Dawa Sherpa.

Pepper and Dawa were climbing independently of other groups on the South Col route from the Nepal side.

In the end, Pepper decided to use oxygen after struggling with the altitude more than on previous trips to the Himalaya; she has successfully climbed Cho Oyu sans gas. On her blog she expressed disappointment about using oxygen, but was also philosophical about using it, saying that she wouldn't have made it to the top the day she summited without it.

Pepper won a grant from the AG Society and was also sponsored by Mont, Sea to Summit, Goal Zero, the Sydney Indoor Climbing Gym and Andrew McMahon and his family. To read more about her Everest adventure you can read a gripping account of the ascent on her blog: [alliepepper.blogspot.com](http://alliepepper.blogspot.com)

*Right, Allie Pepper well rugged up on the summit of Mt Everest. Allie Pepper collection*





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## Swamp antechinus *Antechinus minimus*



Photographer Craig Searle writes: 'I took this photo of an *Antechinus minimus* while spending four months last winter as a caretaker on Maatsuyker Island. This is the only mammal (apart from seals) living on the island and has an amazing life cycle. All males die after mating and all females die after weaning their young.'

To submit a photo for All Things Great and Small contact [ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au](mailto:ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au). We will accept photos of plants or animals and pay at our standard rate. Published photos will be accompanied by some history that we will source.

Being largely nocturnal and cryptic in behaviour, Australia's small mammals are notorious for keeping a low profile. As a result, most Australians, even those who are lucky enough to live in or near bushland, rarely catch a glimpse of those that live in their local area. Ordinarily the swamp antechinus (*Antechinus minimus*) is no exception, and while this carnivorous species is now known to be nocturnal (a fancy word meaning active night and day), it generally prefers dense cover. So getting a good look at a live one, or better still photographing one, like the individual shown here from Maatsuyker Island, is quite a rare achievement.

The swamp antechinus occurs patchily along the damp fringe of southeastern mainland Australia, being the most restricted and threatened of the four mainland species of antechinus that occur in Victoria and South Australia. It is also found in Tasmania and on several islands adjacent to both Victoria and Tasmania.

The Tasmanian sub-species (*A. m. minimus*), which includes the population on Maatsuyker Island, is a little different to its mainland cousins with females only having six nipples (two less than on the mainland). In the annual battle for survival that typifies the existence of all antechinus species, this impacts upon the recruitment odds quite

dramatically – as you will see.

Swamp antechinus (like all antechinus and phascogales) have the particularly quirky reproductive strategy of all the males 'dying-off' at the completion of their winter breeding season, just before their first birthday. The problem for the boys is that once they start mating, they stop eating – now that is a one-track mind!

While this might sound harsh, it is thought to be critical in ensuring that the pregnant then lactating mothers and, subsequently, their fast-growing independent young, have access to the resources they need to grow up and breed themselves next year – without competition from adult males. The majority of adult females also won't survive to the following breeding season, but a small proportion will, and occasionally a female has even been known to breed for a third season – quite an achievement considering the population turnover happening all around them.

Given this breeding strategy, and the fact that the swamp antechinus is usually just smaller than your average rat – making them vulnerable to being eaten by other critters – the more young in the pouch each year, the better the odds that the species will persist in a given area. So the fact that the Tasmanian sub-species has less

nipples – with breeding females unable to rear more than six young – is an evolutionary clue that suggests it is less risky to be a swamp antechinus there than on the mainland.

On smaller islands, like Maatsuyker, a lack of predation and competition has enabled swamp antechinus populations to reach higher densities than on the mainland or Tasmania, and this may be the reason the individual photographed here is, quite literally, out in the open.

For those of us with an interest in the species, our knowledge of swamp antechinus distribution is far from complete, and every new record is important. In this respect the synchronised death of all the males annually from 'natural causes' creates a rather unique opportunity for people who spend time out in bushland to be part of the survey effort. Each year in late autumn/early winter, look out for antechinus when bushwalking as it is uncanny how often the males drop dead on walking tracks or by the edge of thick vegetation. If you are lucky enough to find one, just remember to put it in a couple of sealed plastic bags (to contain any smell) before putting them in your freezer, which is the best way to preserve them before passing them on to your state museum.

Mark Bachmann



# Woodchips for electricity



**As a changing forestry industry moves away from native forest woodchips, a proposal for a new biomass plant in NSW makes prospects grim for Australia's forests**

GUY REEVE REPORTS: Premier Barry O'Farrell announced on 4 April 2011 that the first meeting of the NSW State Cabinet had decided to scrap Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act*, with all new applications to be halted from that date.

While many welcomed the scrapping of Part 3A, the decision has resulted in uncertainty regarding its impact on the major projects which are currently in the system. These projects include the South East Fibre Exports (SEFE) proposal for a five-megawatt biomass electricity generation plant on the site of its chip mill at Eden. This is one of the first proposals for such a plant in Australia, and if approved the \$18 million plant will burn wood pellets made from woodchips to create electricity.

This biomass plant proposal is of huge significance in the continued battle to stop woodchipping of native forests. Biomass electricity generation represents an

alternative market for woodchips, which could underwrite the continued destruction of coastal native forests in southeastern Australia.

The plant would create 31 GWh of electricity per annum, 20 per cent of which would be consumed by SEFE while the rest would be sent to the grid, creating revenue for the company.

The controversial project received 1800 submissions against it during the public exhibition period of the development application, and is still under review by the NSW Department of Planning. But following the scrapping of Part 3A by the new Government, the process for assessment of the biomass plant proposal has still not been made clear. Of particular note is the fact that, while the approval process is still uncertain, it was reported in the *Eden Magnet* on 5 May 2011 that SEFE have already taken delivery of a wood pellet making plant. Wood pellets are a composite timber product used mainly in domestic heating but suitable for schools and hospitals – and presumably also for SEFE's proposed biomass electricity generation plant.

Peter Mitchell, SEFE's General Manager, was reported by the *Eden Magnet* as saying

*Areas like NSW's Mumbulla State Forest are at risk from native forest woodchipping.*

Guy Reeve

that the biomass market is expanding at eight per cent per annum as European, Japanese and American economies move away from fossil fuel energy creation. Mr Mitchell said the overall viability of the proposed biomass plant would depend on the price of revenue-generating Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs). 'Should approval be granted for the project, SEFE will then re-assess the economics based on current electricity savings possible and the income the plant would generate from RECs,' he was quoted as saying. While SEFE has already imported the equipment, it is understood that the development application for the pellet making plant has not yet been assessed or approved by the Bega Valley Shire Council.

If SEFE proves through this project that biomass electricity generation from woodchips is viable, others are sure to follow. The war over woodchips between environmentalists and the forest industry will undoubtedly continue unless people and their elected representatives decide otherwise.



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# The road through Devil Territory

## A plan for a tourist road through the Tarkine is resurrected

IN LATE 2009, a new day dawned in the Tarkine. It was no less ethereal than any other morning in the Tarkine – a vast remaining tract of rainforest harking back to the day of the dinosaurs. On this new day, the Tarkine was given an emergency heritage listing.

Back then, the impetus for this swift move was the proposed \$23 million tourist road, which would have involved bulldozing through the heart of pristine wilderness. Now that the emergency listing has lapsed, the Tarkine faces not only mining threats (as reported in *Wild* no 123), but also a revival of the planned tourist road.

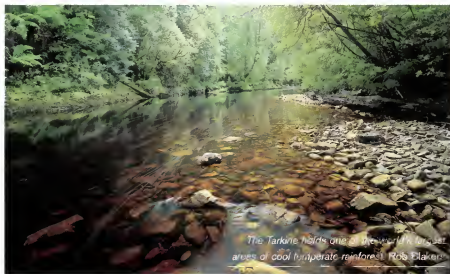
A small consolation is that unlike the original plan for a new road to be carved, the new proposal is for sealing 86 kilometres of existing road. The idea is that the road will draw more tourists into the Tarkine. Ironically, some Tarkine tourism operators believe – as they did with the proposed road in 2009 – that such a road would destroy the values that draw visitors to the Tarkine in the first

place: that is, the wilderness experience and walking through the territory of a wealth of threatened and endangered plant and animal species unique to Australia, including the Tasmanian devil.

In fact, Tasmania's Northwest coast is the last place where Tasmanian devils are free of the facial tumour disease – a fatal, contagious condition contributing to the decline of one of Australia's most iconic wild creatures. A sealed road could pose

an additional threat to the species, as the incidence of road kill may rise (cars on sealed roads can move faster) and the road may actually introduce the disease into the area.

The devil isn't the only thing worth protecting in the Tarkine, and while tourists play a large part in giving natural places economic value, it would be a pity if the character and charm of these wild places were not to remain intact.



The Tarkine holds one of the world's largest areas of cool temperate rainforest. Robt Blakers

## The Tarkine: a slip of the mind?

### A proposal for the Tarkine to gain World Heritage status seems to have disappeared off the political radar

ANDREW MACINTOSH AND DEB WILKINSON REPORT: The latest twist in the Tarkine story concerns its World Heritage status. In the 1990s, the Tasmanian World Heritage Expert Panel, which was formed for the purposes of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement process, found that several places within the Tarkine probably met the criteria for inclusion on the World Heritage List. However, due to pressure from industry groups and the Tasmanian Government, a full assessment of its global heritage significance did not progress. Things seemed to change in September 2007, when the Australian Senate unanimously agreed to a notice of motion moved by Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett that stated that the Government had asked the

Australian Heritage Council to conduct an assessment of the potential world heritage values of the Tarkine. As the notice of motion was negotiated with the Government, and the Government supported it in the Senate Chamber, environment groups and others presumed that the World Heritage assessment was underway. They were wrong.

In a response to a freedom of information request submitted earlier this year by the Australian Centre for

Environmental Law, the Australian Heritage Council stated that 'no such request to the Australian Heritage Council had been made (nor has such a request been subsequently made)'. It appears the Senate, and the Australian public, were either deliberately or inadvertently misled.

The revelation that the World Heritage assessment was never initiated is another setback for the conservation of the Tarkine. The Federal and State governments seem committed to approving and bedding down the mining projects before anything else is done to raise the conservation status of the Tarkine, or to even recognise its significance. This will ensure that important values associated with the Tarkine are lost without even being considered by Government decision makers.



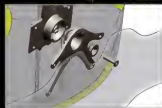
Old growth forest in the Tarkine. Blakers

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# Cattle in the High Country update

## Victoria awaits the State Government's decision on its cattle grazing trials

PHIL INGAMM'S REPORTS: We are still waiting on the Victorian Government to indicate whether its cattle grazing 'trials' in the Alpine National Park will continue.

Neither cattle grazing, nor a cattle grazing trial, were recommended as useful fire prevention tools by the Bushfires Royal Commission. As such, the best thing the Victorian Government

could do is to put a hold on the trials.

Perhaps the greatest problem stemming from this episode in conservation management is the apparent dismissal of proper scientific processes. The advice of a highly qualified independent scientific panel should be sought to determine how the true priorities for research might be implemented.

Last summer's 'trial' shows how dangerous it can be to let political favours rule government policy. If the Victorian

Government sticks with the hastily designed trial sites it used for last summer's fiasco (largely old grazing license areas), the case for federal intervention would be clear. If the trials take place in redesigned trial sites within the national park, the Victorian Government would still have to explain why the trials could not take place outside the park, and it would still be obliged to refer the trials for federal approval.

# Nullarbor wilderness declared

## Almost one million hectares of iconic landscape has been protected

PETER OWEN REPORTS: South Australian Premier Mike Rann has recently declared the protection of a vast area of the internationally iconic Nullarbor Plain.

In 2005, the Wilderness Society nominated the Nullarbor Plain for protection under South Australia's Wilderness Protection Act. Widely acclaimed for its outstanding natural and cultural heritage values, the Nullarbor's stark and uniquely Australian landscape is home to the biggest piece of continuous limestone on the planet, as well as the largest semi-arid karst cave system in the world – that is, an underground network of caves formed by the movement of water. Some of these caves

are so remote and extensive that they have the potential to be to cavers what the Himalaya is to alpinists.

The Nullarbor Wilderness Protection Area will cover 900 000 hectares – an area the same size as the famous Yellowstone National Park in the United States. With this announcement the SA Government has effectively doubled the size of the Wilderness Protection Area estate in SA, making it a grand initiative.

The spectacular Bunda Cliffs – about 100 kilometres of isolated coastal cliffline – are protected within the area and connect it to the Great Australian Bight Marine Park. What is needed now is a commitment to ongoing management and funding for an Indigenous Ranger Program.



# World heritage listing on the cards for the West MacDonnells

## The first step towards World Heritage Listing for the West MacDonnells is nearly complete

The spectacular West MacDonnells, known for its rocky gorges and ancient landscapes, is being groomed for World Heritage Listing. The park – central Australia's largest – was nominated by the Northern Territory Government in late 2007 for the National Heritage List, and was one of 13 nominations accepted for assessment by the Australian Heritage Council. Finally, almost four years later, these assessments are due for completion in June 2011.

If successful, the Northern Territory Government will be able to nominate the West MacDonnells for UNESCO World Heritage Listing (although only one potential World Heritage place can be nominated by any one country each year).

West MacDonnell National Park, home of the famous Larapinta Trail – extending over 223 kilometres along the backbone of the range – holds some of the oldest exposed rock on the planet as well as a number of rare plants and animals, and will be a valuable addition to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

**Left,** walkers on the Larapinta Trail. Glenn Tempest.

**Top,** An ancient myall on the edge of the Nullarbor Plain. Bill Doyle

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XXL	35L	30 x 22 cm	350g



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# Take Me To The River

Landlubber no more, *Quentin Chester* takes to the water



**'In the space of a few minutes the surface of the river changed from a soft, silver-like crushed foil to a dark, lumpy chop. Spray flew down the length of the kayak from waves slapping against the bow. And with every paddle stroke flecks of water spat off the blades into my face.'**

**T**he kayak slipped smartly through the water. This swiftness was a surprise.

Here I was, travelling at the pace of a brisk run, yet with no more effort than joining a Mexican wave. Ahead, a line of big paperbarks were hunched along the river's edge. I decided to rest the paddle across the cockpit and let the momentum take me. It was glide time.

A chorus of bird calls carried across the water as I slid into the shadows of the trees. Little drops of water fell from the blades of my paddle, creating a succession of perfect, concentric ripples in the river's glassy surface. I was sitting in a chair with the world advancing as smoothly as five-star cinematography. I realised this was what I'd come here for: to find a way inside a water-bound world.

A couple of hours earlier this same two-man kayak had been upside down on the edge of a nearby paddock. Judging from the height of the grass it had been there for a while. When my neighbour Kate helped me lift the boat a multi-species selection of wildlife emerged from underneath. 'Ah ha, the rodent Hilton!' I said, as a dozen mice scurried out of tunnels in the dirt mounds they'd built inside the cockpit openings. 'Arrrgh', squawked Kate as she jumped backwards, 'I hate mice.'

The kayak was much more than a haggard fibreglass shell with cracks and scrapes in the gel coat. It was also as heavy as a stone casket. Having been warned of this fact by Kate's husband Andy, I'd brought a boat trailer as transport. That meant Kate could stay clear of any stowaway mice while I slid the craft up on the trailer's rollers. It also meant I could take it to the river and launch it alone. Given the depths of my inexperience with all things kayaking, keeping potential humiliations under wraps seemed to be the way to go.

As it turned out there was no problem getting the blue beast into the water. Indeed, tethered to a riverside tree, it looked downright dashing. Reassuringly buoyant too. However, below decks things were less than ship-shape. Somehow, a thick mound of dirt had settled in transit on the kayak's floor. Not only that, but, as I fiddled with the seats, two large red-backs appeared from under the deck. At this point the sensible thing would have been to take the kayak home for a clean and a spot of arachnid eradication. However, I'd

been waiting for months to get on to this stretch of water. In the bronze glow of late-autumn light, the river was simply too inviting to leave.

A kayak presents virtually unlimited opportunities to make you look like a total dipstick. These include an inability to paddle a straight line. Or, for that matter, a curvy one. An intermittent failure to connect one's paddle with the water. And, the biggie, the mid-stream capsiz. My personal forté is a consistent difficulty with achieving entry. After squashing the red-backs with the butt of my Sigg bottle, I then spent several minutes trying to insert body parts into what appeared to be a shrinking opening I could get one leg in but not both. The one saving mercy of this ordeal was not having to share it with a gawking crowd.

With a little less haste it eventually became clear that the seats – in truth they were Namco plastic chairs with the legs lopped off – needed to be shunted back hard into the curve of the cockpit. So, at last, both legs were in and the grand voyage was underway. With a few dabs of the paddle I was in the middle of the river and, almost without thinking, practising all sorts of bracing and draw strokes.

It was mildly astonishing to realise how many such manoeuvres were stored in the outhouse called memory. The boat wasn't bad either. As Andy had promised, the old girl sat nice and stable in the water. In no time we were a couple of blissful kilometres upstream. It's true, there were strange prickly sensations on my legs. Yet, to be honest, I didn't care whether that was irritation from strands of fibreglass or an army of red-backs marching to my groin. At that moment, cruising in the sun, I found it impossible to imagine anyone having more fun than this while sitting in a puddle of mud and mouse droppings.

I've never been a paddler as such. This is not surprising when I live in a state where the only thing you could call a river – the Murray – is either overrun by jet skis and houseboats or drained dry by upstream irrigators. In earlier days I did dabble in a little tame canoe touring on Murray backwaters around Katarapko and Chowilla. At the same time an aversion to getting wet, plus a barely suppressed terror of doing Eskimo rolls, kept me out of sea and surf kayaking. Apart from the odd rafting trip in Nepal and larking about

**Right, Quentin's borrowed kayak on the Chapman River. Quentin Chester**

on a Li Lo in Blue Mountains canyons, walking and climbing became my default outdoor modes.

However, as I eased into a glide and drifted upstream towards the paperbarks, it was hard to resist the thought that I might have been missing out on something – and maybe something big – all these years.

The impetus for this conversion came after some exceptional late summer rains. As the main channel of the Chapman River and nearby lagoon suddenly filled, so pelicans appeared and ducks and black swans started to breed nearly six months ahead of schedule. It was a startling transformation. For years I'd casually kept an eye on the river's ups and downs from picnic spots and nearby tracks. But that still left longish stretches inaccessible by any other means. My curiosity nerve had been niggled.

In the shallows the water was no deeper than the blade of my paddle. Through the dry months these flats are exposed as meadows of samphire, the salt-hardy native succulent. Normally at this time of year they would have started turning red, like vast carpets of crimson shag pile. But almost overnight the meadows were inundated and now I could trawl my fingers through the samphire's beaded dreads while small schools of black bream darted for cover.

Paddling back out to the middle of the river it became apparent I was now bobbing alone on a bend and completely hidden from roads, farmhouses and all sordid traces of the outside world. For a pitiful, waterway-deprived South Australian this felt as wildly exotic as any stretch of the Zambezi or Orinoco. The paperbarks formed a ten-metre high wall of vegetation on both sides. The surface of their fat, arm-like branches were as pale and flaky as pastry. Cantilevered four or five metres over the water, they served as the perfect fish-spotting perches for white-faced herons. Meanwhile the trees' leafy skirts dipped to the water giving cover to the chestnut teal ducks and the family groups of black swans.

After so many years I'd forgotten the uncanny intimacy a kayak brings. Sitting as low as a Formula One driver, you face the river on its own terms. Your eye line registers the ever-changing surface of the water – every last ripple and blip. It's a privileged vantage point. And while your



presence is never exactly unnoticed, it's hardly intrusive.

Even at my sedate tempo the many details of the river, the light bursts and emerging shapes, the creature cameos and hidden calls were overwhelming. A multiplier effect comes into play. Focus hard enough and time stalls. In the rocking rhythm of paddle blades dipping to the water you join another kind of flow. Once you give it a nudge the river does the rest.

When the mood and conditions are right, the act of paddling has an unforced elegance. There's a poise that's both muscular and a dash meditative. Although it's possible to get a taste of this when walking – especially on the flat with a rolling stride – being on foot more often feels a bit clumsy and lumbering. By contrast, on skis or in a canoe these silky passages seem easier to sustain – grace moments when the business of moving allows the luxury to forget, plus a different sort of knowing. Just the thing for people who want to have their kayak and eat it too.

The only snag with this forgetting is occasionally losing one's grip on certain practical details. Which is why, instead of simply backtracking to the put-in point, I chose to paddle right past. Out of the back of my mind another long-held plan took hold. I'd always wanted to follow the river to where it met the sea. Or, more accurately, the sand bar that separated the two.

In actual distance it wasn't that far. However, time was not on my side. The sun was already down and a strong northerly breeze had sprung up. On the ridge above the estuary the big sugar gums were bending in the wind and a mob of magpies struggled to keep hold of their perches on the outer limbs. I paddled onwards in punchy, fitful bursts, struggling to make headway into the breeze. In the space of a

few minutes the surface of the river changed from a soft, silver-like crushed foil to a dark, lumpy chop. Spray flew down the length of the kayak from waves slapping against the bow. And with every paddle stroke flecks of water spat off the blades into my face.

Suddenly there was nothing in any way elegant or unforced about my progress across the dark water. It was a curt reminder that wind is the mortal enemy of kayakers everywhere. And so a different kind of chemistry came into play, a manic stubbornness driving me through to the end of the line in an ugly thrash of shovel and sweep strokes. There at last in the lee of the fore-dune I could shelter for a few moments. The light was too dim to see anything much of the sandbar across the mouth of the estuary, although it was possible to follow the lines of white breakers landing hard on the bay beyond.

It was that hour of the evening when a cool dampness spills from the dunes. I could feel blisters forming on my palms and an odd numbness in the leg department. Nevertheless it seemed more than okay to be hunkered there for a few more light-headed moments with the boom of the waves resonating through the hull of the old boat. Even in the near-dark I felt unusually calm about the run home. The wind would be on my back. Not just that, but my curiosity would be repaid. The river would take me.

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*A Wild contributor since issue no 3, Quentin Chester is a freelance journalist and the author of six books about wilderness places.*  
Blog: [quentinchester.blogspot.com](http://quentinchester.blogspot.com)

# The MEANING of MICHAEL COLLIE

A life can be measured in meaning. After all, that is what we are all searching for. Speaking with Michael Collie – one of the founders of *Wild* – felt like listening to someone who has lived that search.

Words *Simon Madden*, uncredited photo *Michael Collie*

Boy-Michael though was far from a paragon of a meaningful life. A self-confessed slacker who admits thinking 51 per cent was one per cent too much effort, Michael reflects on his education: 'I'm the sort of person who needs to think what they are doing is important or it isn't worth it, all through school I couldn't see the point.' He managed to limp through and fell into Design at Swinburne University. 'Art was the only thing I was good at,' he says fatalistically.

It is our parents who are responsible for not only our character but also our passions. They mould our young minds by exposing us to certain things, shielding us from others and, in the process, set in motion the arc of our lives. Michael echoes this. He clearly traces his love of the outdoors to his father and his artistic flair to his mother.

Her art was very practical, skewed towards craft, and this pragmatic bias infected her son. 'I'm only really interested in designing if I have something to say. I find a lot of visual arts utterly fatuous; art for the sake of



*Michael, Elspeth, Katherine and Lucy Collie resting while walking into Laguna Sucia, Parque de los Glaciers, Argentina.*

art doesn't convince me at all.'

His father was a pastor, a Godly man, and even though his work precluded consistent weekends in the bush, his library shone with tales of adventure in wild places, perfect for sparking a child's verdant imagination. Still, the family got out when they could and one holiday to the seashore

at Queenscliff in Victoria stands out.

The young Michael was captivated by the sea, its immensity and the romance in losing sight of land. 'My parents should have apprenticed me to a deep sea fisherman,' he laments. That trip he befriended a fisherman and so spent several holidays fishing in Bass Strait. Of course, all young boys are hungry for adventure and his fascination is partly explained by this, but it was also the connection between man and ocean that intrigued Michael. 'We would drive up to the cliff top late at night and the fisherman would tell me what the tide was doing from the sound of the waves.' The idea was planted that a person in synch with their environment reads it in ways others do not.

Some years later this would be reinforced, this time on land. 'My father and his friends took me to the Cobberas. The party included a country man. While scaling Cobberas One the self-styled bushman told me to put my compass away and instead "read the land". This comment changed the way I moved through landscape.' This was a glimpse into a vast



Collie attempting a new route on Aguja Nuez, Cajón de Los Andes, Argentina. Juan de la Cruz. Left, on the summit of Aguja de a 'S'. Parque de los Glaciares, Argentina. Lorena Reyes

reservoir of wisdom that would inform a lifetime of exploring.

Michael still speaks with reverence about the country around the Cobberas. 'I think the Victorian High Country is the most beautiful landscape I have ever been in. The snow grass studded by wind pruned snow gums that look like marine life, almost like an octopus flaying. I adore landscapes in hostile environments. Nature's adaptation to unpredictable conditions produces the most astonishing life forms.'

It's only fitting that it was in the High Country that Michael, skiing with long time walking partner and Wild's third man Brian Walters, met Chris Baxter and together they hatched Wild. 'I met Chris, he popped the question and I barely graduated as my studies were eclipsed by a new project. This combined all my passions; climbing, walking, design, all rolled into one.' The joy derived from nature was the perfect vessel to give form to his art and so Wild had its art director.

Their relationship became brotherly, Michael tells me, with each the other's foil. 'Chris was very intense, I'm a bit more laid back so I was a stabilising influence and he showed me that being scrupulous pays off in the end.' As they built the magazine the ensuing years were all-consuming. 'We hurled ourselves into it and were probably poor company because we worked hard. We started out in the front room in his house and at night I literally cased off the chair and slipped under the desk and slept.'

Michael had discovered the drive born from believing in what you are doing and refined his design ethos. 'I was passionate about the content so it made sense to present it in the best possible way. I believe in the primacy of words and designing as a way of propelling a message.' Despite being swept up in the perfect storm of his

interests, five years later Michael felt an itch to move. It took six months to summon the courage to tell Chris.

There was no bitterness, Chris understood, they instituted an orderly handover plan and 13 months later, Michael was again searching.

What do you do when your youthful dreams have been realised? Always a deeply religious man, he began to more fully dedicate himself to his faith. He undertook a Diploma of Bible and Mission at Ridley College and completed missionary studies at St Andrew's Hall, leading to visits to Thailand, Nepal and several months hunting and gathering on a remote outstation in Arnhem Land, finding time in 1990 to marry his sweetheart Elspeth. All the while he paid the bills through freelancing and a stint as the Wilderness Society's inaugural National Retail Coordinator.

Soon the two left their house in Brunswick and followed their calling across the Pacific, taking on the task of helping to build Certeza, a Christian publishing company based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. When he talks of his missionary work Michael uses the same language as describing an intrepid trip, that of grand adventure and the unknown. A new country, built around a new culture, with unfamiliar institutions bound up in a language they had no knowledge of.

The environment was also new and despite suffering early on from a longing for his beloved Australian bush, Michael soon learned to read his new surroundings. It was easy for his eyes to see in the Argentine landscapes what he loved most about those he had left behind. 'I love the desert country in the northwest of Argentina, and Patagonia as well, where you see these beautiful delicate life forms

forged under the most hostile conditions.' This was the stunning life in adversity that he so admired.

The big mountains of the Andes drew him as they were always going to, and he set off at every opportunity to explore them, though his time quickly became more precious after the birth of two daughters. It is no coincidence the words 'explore' and 'learn' are symbiotic – we explore an idea on our way to learning it – and Michael's reflections cemented this relationship: 'The mountains are great teachers, unforgiving teachers, you grow because you take on a challenge outside your experience and you're not sure if it's outside your ability.' The simple imperative to perform well or die appeals to Michael.

Just as at Wild, work in Argentina had an expiry date. Michael was better equipped to deal with it this time and so when after 16 years the moment came to step back from Certeza, Michael did it. He packed up his family of four, signed off by undertaking the greatest climb of his career – a 14-pitch grade-20 outside of Mendoza that scaled the proudest feature in a powerful glacial valley – bid farewell to his beloved hummingbirds and came back to Melbourne.

Listening to him wax in a proud Spanish about his time in Argentina, about football teams and maté tea ceremonies, I can't help but think he is a man who may have never felt completely at peace in Australia but did so in Argentina, at least in its memory: foreign lands can be more forgiving to self-perception. Having found the chaos accepting, Michael is critical of the much-changed Australia. 'We're the world's biggest polluters and we're waiting for someone to pay us to do the right thing!' He also laments a loss of adventure: 'We're into comfort and security,' he chides, 'you don't build a nation on comfort. Comfort kills.'

So the family is back, torn between two worlds, living in a house in Nunawading that has a bush garden where eastern spine bills – the closest native bird to hummingbirds in Australia – roost and caroling magpies sing. Michael and Elspeth are working to expand their publishing reach globally through partnerships with Christian book publishers in East Africa, Asia and Latin America. 'Last year I conducted training for publishers in Mongolia and China, difficult places to publish Christian books, very exciting.' His parting message is that adventure can be found in every facet of life, not just in high mountains or high seas, and that adventure is where he finds meaning. W

# Return to JERUSALEM

*Mike Martyn revisits Tasmania's Walls of Jerusalem in winter*

**T**he Walls of Jerusalem have always held fond memories for me. My wife and I did our first overnight walk together there. We took our kids there as a prelude to the Overland Track. And I had a strange experience years ago, walking in kicking up dust in joggers and shorts, then walking out the next day in knee-deep snow in a blizzard. Despite this rude introduction to Tasmanian summer walking, as I left I looked back through Herods Gate just as a patch of blue passed over and revealed the Walls. The view left me with a strong desire to return on skis. Little did I know it would take more than 20 years to happen.

Finally, in 2010 the rare combination of snowfall, weather forecast, companion and available time all came together. As is typical of our Tassie trips, planning was impromptu. The idea was raised on

Wednesday and confirmed on Thursday night. The forecast was for more snow on Friday so we decided against an early start. Nick (my 27-year-old eldest son) and I finally got out of Hobart mid-morning, buying some food and provisions on the way. Nick packed light: rice, lentils, one spoon, sleeping bag and his ski gear all packed into a 50 litre pack. I was less particular and also had my camera gear, including tripod, thrown into a 90 litre pack, which he naturally ridiculed. In a few hours time I would be agreeing with him.

We were sporting large plastic boots, fat Telemark skis, skins, snow shovels and no tent, a sight the other bushwalkers in the car park weren't used to. In fact, our lack of gear was met with a large helping of doubt. Were they wrong or right? We weren't sure ourselves at this stage.

The plan was to ski into Dixons Kingdom and perhaps build an igloo or snow cave on Mt Jerusalem and explore from there. In retrospect leaving the car park at 2.30pm in winter was a bit late. As we reached the ridge and the snowline above Trappers hut I realised that perhaps the schooner and counter lunch at Mole Creek had also not been a good idea. But at least now we could put our skis on.

We were following some walker's tracks (both boots and snow shoes) that actually made skiing harder, and with the inclement weather neither of us were overly confident of where exactly we were heading. As the sun set, in between snow flurries, I was lagging badly and starting to cramp, testing Nick's patience – we were still short of Wild Dog Creek. Nick, in an attempt to pick up the speed,







tried to take both our packs, but refused to make a seat for me on top. After all the times I had carried him when he was young!

that we decided putting on torches and carrying on wasn't a good plan. So we set up a cosy bivvy in the shelter of a grove of pencil pines just above Wild Dog

lightweight sleeping bag in the elements so went sans bivvy bag. The snow laden pencil pines glowing in the candle light deserved a photo, but I was too tired to set up my tripod. Despite snow falling on my face it didn't prove difficult to fall asleep. It was actually a comfortable night with moonlight and then a misty sunrise filtering through the pines. Luckily there was minimal fresh snow.

The next day started early with hot coffee and porridge provided for me in my sleeping bag. I felt surprisingly good as we skied off over Wild Dog Creek and up through Herods Gate. Nick tested some lake ice but soon found himself in an ice slurry on the bottom – luckily only up to his knees. Once again I had put my camera away too early and missed the action. As we rounded Lake Salome under the West Wall the clouds opened,

**'As we rounded Lake Salome under the West Wall the clouds opened, the sun beamed down, and with this blue bird vista came a staggering view of the snow blanketed valley. On seeing the snow-covered gullies on the West Wall Nick ditched his pack and worked his way up in very deep, steep snow to carve a fine series of turns back down.'**

As it got dark we passed the walkers whose tracks we had been following pitching their tents. I fell into the soft snow yet again and Nick was forced to come back and pull me out. It was then

Creek. I had just enough energy left to help dig out a level area, before retiring to my sleeping bag and vintage (1979 edition) bivvy bag with a cup of tea. Nick was keen to try out his new



**Previous page,** Nick Mertyn looking out from the summit of Mt Jerusalem at dawn. **Clockwise from left,** Nick skinning through pines. Skiing below the West Wall. Lunchtime. All photos by the author

the sun beamed down, and with this blue bird vista came a staggering view of the snow blanketed valley. On seeing the snow-covered gullies on the West Wall Nick ditched his pack and worked his way up in very deep, steep snow to carve a fine series of turns back down. The wind dropped and under a brilliant blue sky we tracked up past white pencil pines under the icy West Wall to the Damascus Gate. Untracked snow, icicles hanging off the snowy pines, a large group of wallabies foraging for food and a wedge-tailed eagle circling in the blue sky above

made it all very surreal. The eagle followed Nick as he climbed up the Temple and skied another line down. I was in a photographer's paradise.

Passing through Damascus Gate we removed our skins and descended through the thick, snow-laden pencil pine forest to Dixons Kingdom. The snow was soft and deep amongst the trees and it felt more like a North American ski trip than one in central Tassie. We popped out of the trees in Jaffa Vale just below Dixons Kingdom Hut. It can be interesting being the first to arrive at a hut after a heavy snowfall. I have had to dig a few entrances out and once had the experience of not being able to find a hut (Windy Creek at Kosciuszko), as it had been completely buried under the snow.

Dixons Kingdom Hut is a low profile hut but the snow was less than one metre deep, so we only had to dig out the door and entrance. It was a good feeling to be able to take off my pack and spread out in the hut. Nick was happy to get out of

his wet boots and try to dry the inners over our stove. The hut was built by mountain cattlemen in the 1950s, but has been enlarged and modified over the years. One half of the hut is dirt floor, and the other half is taken up by a sleeping platform suitable for three people. It's a bit draughty and the possums can climb in over the door (which we craftily blocked with skis and shovels), but it does have a makeshift curtain on the window. We decided to stay in the hut that night as the snow was not really ideal for igloos or snow caves. We had a leisurely lunch and well deserved rest before our planned late afternoon ski up Mt Jerusalem. Nick actually had an afternoon nap – kids these days!

The ski up Jaffa Vale and Mt Jerusalem later on was pretty and in quite consistent soft snow. Although still cloudy the views were worthwhile and the sun rewarded us by popping out for a time when we were on the summit. However, distant peaks were hidden and as we could see snow showers approaching we made a rapid descent back down to the hut, all the while discussing plans for another summit assault in the morning to capture the sunrise views of the Tasmanian central highlands. Another of our fanciful



dreams, but we were optimistic.

Dinner was a long drawn out affair: soup, spicy lentils and rice, custard and fruit. Well-placed candles lit the hut and set a luxurious mood. The tripod and camera captured that well – including the steam rising from Nick's drying socks. We lamented not bringing the single malt to round off the evening before retiring to our sleeping bags.

I stuck my head out of the hut at 5am to find the forecast for a clear frosty morning correct. It was surprising that the weather cooperated with our optimism. We dressed quickly and skied by bright moonlight up our iced up tracks from the day before, the heavy frost crystals glistening in the moonlight. As we ascended Mt Jerusalem the start of the red morning glow framed Nick in front of me. We reached the summit to a white vista of Tasmanian peaks, all white, bathed in moonlight and dawn light. We had time to appreciate and shoot some images before the first rays of sunshine lit up the landscape with an orange glow, turning a spectacular moment into a truly memorable one. With the moon above, the view to the west was awesome: Cradle Mountain, Barn Bluff, Pelion West, Ossa and the Du Cane Range were all visible. There were so many white peaks around

us that we proceeded to spend an hour hypothesising (some would say arguing) as to their actual names:

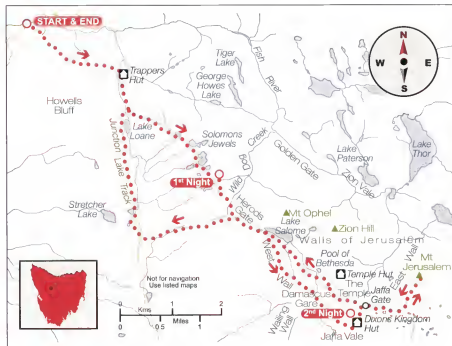
'NO, THAT IS CLEARLY OSSA.'

'NO, I AM TELLING YOU THAT IS PELION WEST AND THAT IS OSSA.'

To the east, the Western Lakes, Great Lake and even Ben Lomond were visible,

all glowing in the sun. We took all this in for what seemed an eternity before skiing back to the hut.

Breakfast was enjoyed sitting in the sun outside the hut, joined by a friendly wallaby. It was a leisurely affair, as we were waiting for the sun to soften the frost crust covering the countryside – this





**Left, Nick Martyn carrying the author's pack as well as his own on the way into the Walls of Jerusalem.**

breakable crust is the natural nemesis of Telemark skiers. It was a sad moment when we started to pack up and head out, as we both felt very at home right there. We decided to ski over the Temple to make use of the packed snow on the east side, pick up some views and have a long run down past the Pool of Bethesda. Climbing the Temple was surreal and featured some awesome sculpturing of cornices and scalloped snow. Skins allowed us to climb quite steeply and we were rewarded with great views all the way up and over the summit. We even came across signs of other people – some snow shoe tracks made by other early risers. Then we took the skins off and had

a fun ski down, albeit carrying a pack, which in my case lead to a few spills. We glided through the Vale of Bethesda where two walkers were having morning tea and absorbing the sunshine and view. We shared the views and passed on our admiration for their commitment to the walk and then continued on. Looking at the depth of some of their tracks made me glad I was on skis.

We quickly passed through Herods Gate. At the Wild Dog Creek campsite we decided to head back along the more open gullies to the west, leading to the Lake Adelaide Track, rather than the standard route. The view of Pelion West, East and Ossa was a great reward at the

saddle heading into the Lake Adelaide valley, and made the detour all the more worthwhile. We had lunch sitting on the snow in the sun beside a bubbling stream with Mt Geryon in the background – the trip just seemed to go from one pleasant vista to another. After lunch we skied past numerous families of wombats out for an afternoon graze. It had warmed up, so I was in short sleeves, while Nick had opted to remove all his top layers to work on his Tasmanian winter tan. The route was a bit circuitous around lakes and thickets. We had numerous arguments on which side of the lake/valley to ski (Nick obviously pressing his point of view, which, sadly for me, turned out to be correct). We finally arrived at Trappers Hut and it was ski off and the final walk back down to the car.

Anyone who has ever managed to finally complete one of those trips that you have dreamed about, discussed at dinner parties and speculated over for decades will understand how we felt. Getting back into the car and driving home we couldn't help but thank our lucky stars that we had finally achieved it in style and in perfect weather. We drove back to Hobart with glowing faces and broad smiles, though I was happy to sleep it out in the co-pilot seat and leave Nick with the driving (God knows, I have done it enough for him – I mean, what are kids for anyway?). **W**

*Mike Martyn spent his youth walking, caving and canyoning in the Blue Mountains in preparation for the last 30 years of living in, and exploring Tasmania. He has a passion for the outdoors which he has passed on to his family and friends.*



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LIVE THE DREAM™







Leila McMahon-Kunta striding below one of the Tarkine's enormous sand dunes. **Close inset**, the cocky salmon we ate for dinner on the last night. **Inset, far left**, a fairy penguin we found on the beach. All uncredited photos by the author

an easy route by following beaches and the tracks of four-wheel drivers.

The start of the walk didn't impress me; we wandered along an old four-wheel drive track, before leaving it and passing through degraded coastal scrub and grassy plains scattered with the remnants of cattle grazing – old bits of fences, parts of cars, eroded dunes and random junk. Evidently cattle were still being pastured, leaving their calling card everywhere in the form of cowpats. Where we walked along the beach, it was scattered with rubbish washed up from the sea. It didn't feel very wild. But gradually the land changed. We started to follow a narrow, sandy four-wheel drive track that threaded its way through coastal dunes and low heath. And we found the first of many middens, shells stacked up on top of one another and cascading down in avalanches of abalone, mussel, pipi and sea snail shells. It was easy to imagine Indigenous people from the local tribe sitting on top of a dune looking out to sea and enjoying a feast of shellfish, before the arrival of white people, disease, murder and the destruction of their way of life.

Occasionally the four-wheel drive track would drop us back down on to wide beaches, and with everyone moving at their own speed we would be strung out along



**'And then distant specks on the horizon, Leila and Lawry, way ahead because they are so full of energy they spend half their time walking and the other half jogging, their packs bouncing up and down in unison, their bodies bumping together as if literally attached at the hip.'**

the wave line. Usually I was last, continually stopping to photograph McMahons rapidly moving ahead of me, artistic arrangements of seaweed or the reflections of the sky in

the thin veneer of a wave's wash across the sand. In front of me, footprints would move south – forwards – to the slightly bow-legged figure of Bob striding purposefully towards the horizon. Ahead of him, Andy, the builder and part-time architect, his battered brown trilby perched above scratched glasses, his fishing rod rising above his pack like an aerial, betraying his position even behind dunes. Then ahead of him, my old man, leaning into his pack, like a man into the wind, alone with his thoughts. And then distant specks on the horizon, Leila and Lawry, way ahead because they are so full of energy that they spend half their time walking and the other half jogging, their packs bouncing up and down in unison, their bodies bumping together as if literally attached at the hip. The two are inseparable: on the cusp of adolescence, they are long-limbed like colts in their tights, Leila dark-haired and brown-eyed and Lawry blonde and fair-skinned, his heavy framed glasses hiding blue eyes and a remarkably calm personality.

Late in the afternoon we came to a wide tannin-stained creek. Here I found a beautiful piece of yellow sandstone shaped into a hand-tool on the sand beside the creek, as if left there just yesterday. It is the

first of literally hundreds if not thousands of hand-worked stone we come across, usually scattered with abandon across the top of the hundreds of enormous middens we pass in the following days. It would probably have been left by a member of the Tarkineer tribe. (The name Tarkine was coined by environmentalists from the Indigenous name for the area 'Tar-keen-nee'.) The hand-tools and middens are just some of the signs of Indigenous people. North of Temma incredible petroglyphs are found at Sundowner Point, including village sites and hut depressions.

The arrival of white people on the West Coast had typically tragic consequences for the local Indigenous people, who were often killed through disease or murder, with women often kidnapped or traded and taken off by sealers as slaves or wives to remote islands in the Bass Strait.

On just the other side of the creek we decided to make camp behind some sand dunes. Dad, Bob and I went to get water from the creek, which turned out to be brackish, so we ended up following its twisting path upstream for a few hundred metres through thick tea tree until we found a pool where the water was drinkable. Returning from the pool we decided to take a 'shortcut'. Like all the best shortcuts it was a mistake that took us twice as long and left our legs battered and scratched from thrashing through thick scrub. With our water bottles full, we built a small fire and began dinner. The McMahon faction had prepared a series of gourmet delights for the trip; Bob's wife Susie had carefully cooked up a range of meals and snacks for her brood, which she had then dehydrated. The Taylor contingent hadn't prepared so well in comparison, only managing a rushed shop in Launceston that produced an unimaginative array of

food that you would never eat at home. There was some food envy as a result.

After dinner I watched the sun set out over the ocean before the cold drove me back behind the lee of the dunes to our fire, where, fatefully, I accepted Andy's powerful cup of cowboy coffee.

The next morning the weather was much better than my mood after a sleepless night; big silver-lined clouds sitting in a blue sky, the light brightening the already vivid greens of the vegetation. After a quick breakfast we set off, following the four-wheel drive track through the dunes. Along this stretch the damage from four-wheel drives was especially bad, the track often cutting through middens, while in other places you could see that some had deliberately driven through bogs for fun – some of the worst of them even had signs saying that they had been spiked in an effort to deter bog lovers. Then there was the rubbish; plastic bottles, bits of cars and Jim Beam and cola cans – you name it, we could have found it in the bushes beside the track.

Beyond Ordnance Point we were deposited on the long stretch of beach of Kenneth Bay that leads to the low headland of Sandy Cape, 11 or 12 kilometres off. As we plodded along the beach, my attention was attracted by the details: patterns in the sand, beautiful shells, fat fingers of pigface or intricate drapings of seaweed. Bob and I talked about climbing and climbers; obscure routes up the innumerable shields of Tasmanian dolerite and stories of mammoth falls. We discussed the corruption of the Tasmanian parliament and Gunns pulp mill. Leila and Lawry told me the names of the different kinds of sea birds; western terns, molly mooks, cormorants and sea eagles. We saw the odd dead mutton bird or fairy penguin washed





up on the beach, while further inland, on the shallow lakes formed by fresh water creeks wandering to the sea, we spotted black swans.

Along the way we began to pass giant dunes, the kind you would expect to see in the Sahara Desert, their flanks fluted with incredible wind-sculpted patterns and reaching 50 or 60 metres high (I read later that these are apparently some of the biggest dunes in the Southern Hemisphere). And always in front of the big dunes, smaller dunes topped with middens, which I would stop and carefully examine for worked stone, then hurry on behind, always lagging at the rear. Beyond the giant dunes, low heath led to bigger trees and beyond that in the hazy distance, mysterious mountains lurking on the horizon.

As we reached Sandy Cape our feet were growing sore from the repetition of walking on a flat sandy beach, and we were thankful to leave Kenneth Bay, climbing up steeply off the beach and cutting across the base of Sandy Cape on another four-wheel drive track. We had lunch behind an old fishing shack on Sandy Cape, before dropping off the cape and back on to another beach. Shortly after, we came across our first people, a bunch of four-wheel drivers charging along the beach. As they got close one of them had an accident, dropping one wheel of his trailer off a small dune and rolling it. We passed each other with the most perfunctory of nods.

As we walked into the late afternoon, the clouds that had been slowly gathering all day grew darker and more threatening, and it began to drizzle. We put on our waterproofs and leant into the wind, each one of us in the separate world of our



*Bob's battered legs after our 'shortcut' on the first day. **Top**, Lawry looking pleased with his accommodation at the second night's campsite. **Left**, typical Tarkine terrain.*

hoods and thoughts. In the gathering gloom we had a quick team meeting and decided to camp behind some dunes near a stream that cut through the sand. The drizzle soon stopped and we gathered driftwood for a fire and cooked up dinner. I went out on to the beach for a while and sat with Andy while he fished, throwing his line far out into the ocean in the direction of Patagonia. But alas, there were no fish. After eating a simple dinner, the drizzle picked up again and we all ended up in bed early to escape the rain. That night I slept the dreamless sleep of the exhausted.

The following morning we set off once more along another desperately long beach.

Leila and Lawry had at last begun to flag, no longer running ahead. We stopped early for lunch because of sore feet, eating on a set of low rocks lapped by the ocean, watching molly mooks flap and squawk in the wind. Over lunch a small tragedy occurred when a gigantic tsunami (okay, it may have been a small rogue wave) washed away the McMahon's gourmet lunch, the Taylors quietly smirking behind their Vita Wheats, salami and cheese. Not long after lunch we came to the end of the beach, climbing up a short sandy bluff that had the most incredible wind-swept sand formations on it, some of them so perfectly shaped it felt like a crime to disturb them with footprints.

The end of the beach signified a change in the geography of the coast, the beach giving way to rocky bluffs and quartzite towers, behind which a narrow four-wheel drive track cut deeply through black sand and low vegetation, the ocean often hidden from view. It was much hillier and the track followed the contours of the land up and down. At one point the track dipped steeply to the most beautiful creek, where a deep pond led straight into the sea. Climbing back out of the gully we stumbled across a spectacular campsite looking out over the ocean. After a gathering of the McMahon and Taylor clans, we elected to stop early and make camp. The following day we would only have a short walk before arriving at the Pieman River, so we thought we may as well enjoy a relaxing afternoon.

We set up our tents and gathered driftwood from the beach for a fire. Then we all set out to explore the extensive rocky shoals below the campsite; there were limpet covered rocks and pools filled with



The McMahoons: Leila, Lawry, Andy and Bob. **Right**, cousins Leila and Lawry, almost literally attached at the hip.

## THE TARKINE: AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The future of the Tarkine is currently in the balance. Encompassing an area of more than 447 000 hectares and roughly bordered by the Arthur River to the north and the Pieman River to the south, only five per cent of the area is protected in national parks, the remaining area being held in a patchwork of reserves that leave it vulnerable to mining, logging and damage caused by four-wheel drives.

The Tarkine is home to the southern hemisphere's largest remaining tract of cool temperate rainforest – three quarters of Australia's rainforests have already been permanently destroyed – it also holds 60 rare, threatened or endangered species, including the giant freshwater lobster and one of the last populations of Tasmanian devils unaffected by facial tumours. It is a precious jewel in our rapidly shrinking natural world.

Until late last year the area had an Emergency National Heritage Listing to protect it from a tourism road that Forestry Tasmania wanted to put through the area (the planned road has since been abandoned), however that listing was recently allowed to lapse by the Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke, despite a leaked assessment from the Australian Heritage Council confirming the National Heritage values of the area and recommending it for permanent listing. The leaked report contradicts Ministers Burke's announcement that the assessment would take 18 months to put together, when in fact it had already been on his desk for two months. In the short term, it is the reestablishment of the Heritage Listing that will provide the best protection for the Tarkine.

While logging has traditionally been the greatest threat to the Tarkine, the timber industry in Tasmania is currently in crisis and so that particular threat has receded somewhat. Unfortunately minerals are booming, particularly tin, of which the Tarkine has known reserves. Currently 27 different companies hold 56 exploration leases to the Tarkine and in the next 18 months at least three companies have proposed mines for the area, timing that coincides nicely with the lapse of the Emergency National Heritage Listing, and which means the mining proposals avoid the scrutiny required by a National Heritage listing.

The Tarkine National Coalition, the environment group with a particular interest in protecting the area, wants the Tarkine protected through the formation of a national park. It is not demanding the entire area be placed in this national park, only

those areas that have a high conservation value: this would give these areas more permanent protection than the current system of reserves.

But in the meantime the Tarkine faces the immediate threat of three proposed mines: Tasmania Magnesite (Beacon Hill Resources) wants to establish an open cut magnesite mine within the Keith River area; Shree Minerals wants an open cut iron ore mine at Nelson Bay River; and Venture Minerals are planning open cut mining for tin and tungsten in the rainforest at Mount Lindsay. While these mines are almost certain to get approval, all three of these mining companies are start up companies, and thus they are vulnerable to negative publicity because they need to source funds in a tight credit market.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

For action to be taken on mining in the Tarkine – and for the protection of the Tarkine generally – the value of the area has to become more widely known and publicised. One of the easiest things that you can do is help the Tarkine become one of the campaigns pursued by online community advocacy group GetUp!: you can do this by voting for the Tarkine to become a campaign. All you need to do is go to [getup.org.au](http://getup.org.au), click on the Suggestions banner, then select environmental issues and scroll down until you find the Tarkine Wilderness Heritage Listing and vote.

Another excellent course of action is to write to the Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke and let him know that you think the Tarkine should get a permanent National Heritage Listing: [Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Burke.MP@aph.gov.au) Writing letters to the editor of major newspapers is also a good way to draw attention to the Tarkine.

You can also join the Tarkine National Coalition or donate money to this excellent organisation: [tarkine.org.au](http://tarkine.org.au). Finally, the most enjoyable thing you can do is to visit the Tarkine – see it for yourself – and help bring tourism money to the area and reinforce the idea that the Tarkine has more enduring value as a wild place than as a place to dig up minerals or chop down trees. You can either do this privately, as we did in our trip, or you can do it with a guiding company like Tarkine Trails ([tarkinetrails.com.au](http://tarkinetrails.com.au)) which has pioneered several walks in the area over the last ten years.



starfish, crazy coloured lichens, beds of tiny mussels and small, mysterious sandy coves. All the while, the sun settled low in the sky, casting what Andy called 'God light' through the clouds and creating an incredible sunset on the hill above our campsite. Andy and Lawry busied themselves fishing off the rocks, with Andy finding a rich shoal between two reefs. He reeled in fish after fish, eventually catching nine or ten cocky salmon. We ate them that night, cooking them on the hot coals of the fire with a squeeze of the fresh lemon pulled from Andy's bottomless pack, picking the flesh off the bones with greasy fingers. The rich smell of cooking fish brought a Tassie devil out from behind the bushes and into the circles of our headtorches (the Tarkine is one the last places in Tasmania where the devils aren't affected by facial tumours). Andy wasn't finished with the fish course though. From somewhere deep within the confines of his pack he pulled out his *piece de resistance*, a cheesecake. The Taylors were deeply impressed. That night we went to bed with our bellies and spirits fully replete.

After a relaxed start the next morning we left our magical campsite, vowing to return, and continued on down the four-wheel drive track. From this point south to the Pieman was spectacular country, featuring big cliffs of blinding white quartzite and narrow tooth-like blades of rock. It was a beautiful morning, the weather once again proving to be remarkably good – it appeared we wouldn't get to see 'real' West Coast weather this trip. It wasn't long before the four-wheel drive track, edged on each side by the thickest tea tree scrub I have ever seen, brought us to the wide mouth of the Pieman River, where we drank a cup of tea and waited for the ferry, spotting what we thought was a pilot whale in the brackish waters. Eventually the ferry arrived (on the other side of the river) and they sent out a small motorised dingy to come and pick us up two at a time.

On board the *Aradia II* we mixed uneasily with middle-aged tourists, aware that we hadn't showered for days. Below decks we all attacked a pile of fruit cake and made ourselves cups of Milo or tea. Then we cast off for Corinna on the dark waters of the Pieman, sitting up on deck and watching the reflection of the lushly forested hillsides, soaking in the loveliness and remembering those long deserted beaches, the reflections of the sky and the endless sand, sand that months later I would still be knocking out of my shoes, each grain a little transported piece of the Tarkine, a gritty reminder of a land of sky and sea. W

The author would like to thank the McMahon family for having him and his father along, with special thanks to Susie and Kerth for dropping them off and picking them up.



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# Gorge Raiders

*Dave Canldwell explores the Green Gully Track, a newly opened bushwalk in the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park in NSW*

When the horse's hooves thudded into Alan Youdale's chest, the stockman knew he was in trouble. On a stormy night back in 1978 torrential rain was pummelling what is today the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. But it wasn't thunder that was cracking. It was ribs. The 77-year-old also suffered a broken pelvis and a punctured lung after being thrown off his horse. Nine men battled through thick scrub to stretcher the stricken stockman to safety; it took four hours to travel just under five kilometres. All the while leeches feasted upon the rescue party.

Three months after the accident and Alan Youdale was back in the saddle managing 15 000 hectares of gorge country almost single-handedly.

There are few pastoral properties in Australia with a more imposing topography than Green Gully. It may sound like an innocuous tract of parkland filled with families tucking into ham sandwiches, but with its jagged ravines, tumbling rivers and waterfalls, Green Gully's precipitous terrain is prime walking country. Just bring a sturdy pair of knees.

Nowadays National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) are caretakers of this land, as well as Alan Youdale's neighbouring property, where he mustered cattle until his death in 1984.

Up until May this year there were no walking tracks open to the public inside Green Gully. But now experienced bushwalkers can immerse themselves in this part of the Apsley-Macleay Gorge system

thanks to ranger Piers Thomas, who has devised a 65-kilometre, four-day loop track that is best traversed in autumn and spring. Walkers bunk down each night in restored stockmen's huts. Originally, Pier's mission was to highlight the cultural significance of these huts; there are few examples of stockmen's shelters in the Oxley Wild Rivers that haven't been decimated by fire or termites. But while he was compiling historical booklets about the huts, the roving ranger realised that there was a more intimate way that visitors could connect with the past. And so the Green Gully Track was born.

'I don't want the blokes who busted their guts on this land to be forgotten,' says Piers.

He's talking about men like Alan Youdale and Jeff O'Keefe. The latter is one of the last



**Left,** ranger Piers Thomas looking out towards Tooth Rocks (the two humps in the shade). All uncredited photos by the author

approaching against the faint silhouettes of trees that appear like gnarly ghost limbs.

We walk along the Kunderang Trail (a management track) and disappear into the forest from which I heard dingoes howling last night. Piers points out some dingo poo by the side of the track. It's extremely hairy and has pieces of bone in it. Apparently this signifies a healthy diet, although looking at the sharpness of those bones it's no wonder the dingoes were howling so loudly.

A more pleasant, faeces-free view awaits a kilometre or so down the track. Through a break in the trees cloud smothers Kunderang Brook Valley some 800 metres below, as if wanting to shroud its grisly past. Aboriginal massacres occurred here during the 1840s, and some of the reserves in the area were transformed by settlers into low-grade security prisons where the Aboriginals were kept in isolated communities.

Eight kilometres from Cedar Creek there is a brief detour to Colwells Yards, a defunct stockyard close to the site where Alan Youdale fell off his horse.

Jeff O'Keefe has also had some scary moments astride his steed. 'You don't feel real good when them bulls are charging after you', he says. 'You'd go to drive the feral ones but they'd just chase you. And when I say chase, these beasts'd gore you to death if they ever got you on the ground. You had to rely on your horse to get you out of there.'

Jeff used to carry a handgun in case he got charged. Some bulls had horns measuring 52 inches from tip to tip.

Thunder rumbles as we leave Alan Youdale's former property and cross over the border into Green Gully. The sky looms ominously although the storm seems to be behind us. Large raindrops suggest otherwise, but after a brief dousing it fines up again and we leave the Kunderang Trail to venture down a steep access road built by Jeff and his father. At the bottom is Birds Nest Hut, one of the most remote mustering locations on the entire 14 120-hectare Green Gully station.

Jeff and his father toiled in freezing conditions during the winter of 1962 to build Birds Nest Hut and the adjoining stockyards. Cattle could only be driven around ten kilometres a day so building stockyards in the gorge was essential. The

30-metre-square hut stands in a small clearing next to a creek. It took less than a fortnight to erect even though there was no electricity or generators to work with, just simple hand tools like saws and drills. Building the stockyards was harder because they didn't have any lifting machines – only bulldozers with which to position meaty posts and rails.

'When we came to restore this hut every single post had been eaten out by termites,' says Piers as the door to Birds Nest Hut creaks open. It's still the same structure but NPWS have reinforced it with concrete posts. They also repaired the chimney and put in a fireplace. Piers is especially proud of the floor. He laid it with a mixture of tennis court clay, lime, sand and hay. Linseed oil and turpentine were used to waterproof it. The hut is equipped with six stretcher beds, solar lighting, a rainwater tank and a gas stove. It also has cutlery and crockery. Above a worktop is a 1972 calendar advertising Lillyman's Cordial. Old bottles and rusty tins that once contained gun oil and beer line up on a shelf above it.

I tuck into my noodles, pesto and carrots, my face warmed by a fire. When Jeff overnighted here his plate would've been filled with meat, spuds, pumpkin and bread. Music sometimes crackled from an old transistor radio. Tonight's soundtrack is provided by the screeching calls of a masked owl (one of several endangered species in Green Gully) and an antechinus (see this issue's All Things Great and Small on page 13) – a marsupial-like mouse – that scampers across the hut's beams. It's somewhere above the fireplace, perhaps searching for the hidden *Playboy* magazine that is used to be stashed there.

It's a good job I'm not attached to my creek shoes, a pair of skanky old trainers I've brought to wade through Green Gully Creek on day three. Chunks of rubber have been nibbled from the sides; retaliation, perhaps, for not sharing my dinner with the antechinus last night.

From Birds Nest Hut Piers and I trailblaze into the bush, passing the O'Keefe's old stockyard, which is now overrun with ferns and covered in rusty brown lichen. We gradually ascend a ridge having to periodically untangle ourselves from native ivy that snags our clothes. Rocks and logs litter the way. Basic map

remaining Apsley-Macleay Gorge stockmen. In 2004 he sold Green Gully to NPWS having mustered cattle on the station since the late 1950s. Jeff's nickname is Midnight because this is the time he sometimes finishes work. He's not a man averse to 20-hour days. Thankfully, over the next four days as Piers and I wade through creeks and clamber up and down ridges, we'll only be putting in eight-hour shifts.

Early morning fog rolls across the hills as Piers and I leave Cedar Creek Cottage, the start of the walk and the house in which Alan Youdale lived for many years. Dewdrops hang heavy on spiders' webs and the sun battles to break through the mist. I'm half expecting Dick Turpin to gallop towards us at any moment,

reading skills are essential for this part of the walk, although it's pretty straightforward: just keep following the ridge and heading up.

At the top is a trig station where a radio repeater was once built so that the O'Keefes could communicate with their loved ones back home. We join the Rocks Trail, which winds down into a forest of white-topped box gum trees and undulates to the Rocks Lookout, which offers an expansive vista across the gorge. Sunshine sporadically illuminates distant hills with Dalmatian-like spots. From here you can see one of the most prominent formations in the park, Tooth Rocks, although they look more like camel's humps to me.

Leaving the Rocks Trail, the route from here, even though there's no discernible one as yet, descends steeply. Tussock clumps keep my ankles interested and the erect black stems of grass trees act as markers. The gorge rises on both sides and as I descend it's like I'm being gobbled into the belly of Green Gully. Orb spiders weave a metropolis of golden webs between the trees and a huge black snake slithers across the path. A creek trickles at the bottom of the gorge and it's like we've entered a mini canyon. Down here is ideal habitat for endangered brush-tailed rock wallabies. They watch us go through a flood fence at Brumby's Pass, spying from lofty crevices, clearly curious at our presence.

Green Gully Hut stands in a grassy clearing. An old apple tree overlooks the neighbouring stockyard, a tree that nearly put an early end to Jeff's mustering days.

'I was lopping the top off the apple tree with a chainsaw one time,' he recalls. 'It was on a bit of a lean and I couldn't cut it real flat because of the weight of the saw. When the limbs fell they swept me 15 feet to the ground and I landed on me head. Knocked myself right out.'

Jeff's father saw him lying in a heap of thistles under the tree.

'He thought I was dead, but I come round after a while and then he took me to hospital.'

Jeff was back mustering within four days.

Slashing through brambles and stinging nettles, I feel like a pioneer charting undiscovered territory. We've walked four kilometres from Green Gully Hut and the track has ended abruptly. For the next few kilometres it's a case of finding the easiest route. Sometimes that may be bush-bashing on the bank, clambering over rotten logs and slippery branches. Other times it may be wading through thigh-deep water. My half-nibbled creek shoes are filled with gravel and sharp stones are digging into the soles of my feet.

We're deep in the gorge system now and out of the sun's reach. Piers is forging ahead in his Dunlop Volleys. He's carrying a walking pole that he uses to steady himself in the



Piers Thomas checking out a big grass tree. **Right**, an orb-weaving spider weaves its golden web.

water. I don't have one so I'm relying on my balance and taking my time. My feet mould between the gaps in the rocks as creek water rushes against my shins to steer me one way; slippery rocks try to sway me the other.

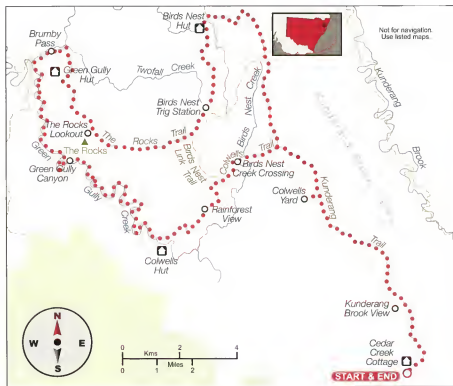
Walking so slowly and with such attention is allowing me to engage with every idiosyncrasy of the terrain. Nettles may be stinging me through my trousers. Branches may be lashing my eyes and lips, but being immersed in such an untamed landscape has a primeval and visceral feel that makes this part of the walk feel like a real jungle expedition.

We come to a waterhole where the sides of the gorge narrow and tower above us like rocky skyscrapers. The water is nearly above my thighs. Jeff would love this part of the walk – his idea of recreation was washing in the river. Hauling ourselves out of the water, we boulder hop to a shallower section of the creek and wade for another three kilometres until we join an overgrown management track. The last four kilometres of the walk to Colwells Hut is lush. Ivy coils around tall trees and on the opposite bank Piers spots a dingo.



'My friend and I were walking down this creek one day,' he says as the dingo hurries off. 'We were scoping it out and drinking the water as happy as you like. Then all of a sudden we found this dead dingo pup in the water. I didn't get sick but this is one of the reasons we advise people to boil all of their water along the track.' I think about making a naff joke about hair of the dog but thankfully our arrival at Colwells Hut distracts me. This is the smallest of the huts along the Green Gully Track and was built by Jeff's son-in-law in 1994. Inside the pit toilet there is a welcoming committee of brown furry moths positioned in a circle around the toilet roll.





**Below**, a pair of brush-tailed rock wallabies. Piers Thomas. **Bottom**, crossing a waterfall in Green Gully Creek.

### FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

NPWS bought Green Gully for the gorge and also to save the endangered brush-tailed rock wallaby. In 1880 these timid creatures were abundant until farmers declared them an agricultural pest. Over three decades many hundreds of thousands were destroyed almost to the point of extinction. Their numbers have continued to fall and it's now estimated that only 15 000 to 30 000 wallabies remain in Australia. The gorge system around Green Gully is home to around 60 to 70 per cent of these.

NPWS are currently tagging brush-tailed rock wallabies in Green Gully with a GPS collar that records their location every 30 minutes. After six months the collar automatically falls off and a tracking device alerts NPWS to the precise location of the discarded collar. In tracking the wallabies' habitual patterns in a place where there are still a comparatively high number left, NPWS is hoping to discover any behavioural patterns that may provide clues as to why they are prospering in this area.

Darkness falls and we light an outside fire in front of which I dry my shoes, socks and trousers. Stars twinkle through the treetops and the distant screeches of masked owls echo through the forest.

The most energy-sapping section of the walk comes on the last day: a three-kilometre trudge with a 600-metre gain that rises sharply from Colwells Hut. The track snakes up the hill and overlooks pockets of dry rainforest – areas of vegetation that are protected from extreme heat on south- and east-facing slopes.

As we rejoin the Kunderang Trail and retrace our steps back to Cedar Creek Cottage, a poem I read in one of Pier's booklets, penned by local woman Grace Stace, comes to mind:

*In the days when man came with his stock whip  
to crack  
And the cattle moved homeward to the country above  
The man, horse and dog would be glad to be back  
To be welcomed back home with love*

I may not have spent the last four days camping out and mustering cattle, but having immersed myself deep within this rugged gorge country, I get a sense of what it is that kept drawing men like Jeff O'Keefe and Alan Youdale back here. Their love for this land meant that they never really left home – it was always around them, wherever they went.

To find out more about the Green Gully Track visit [nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/greengully](http://nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/greengully)

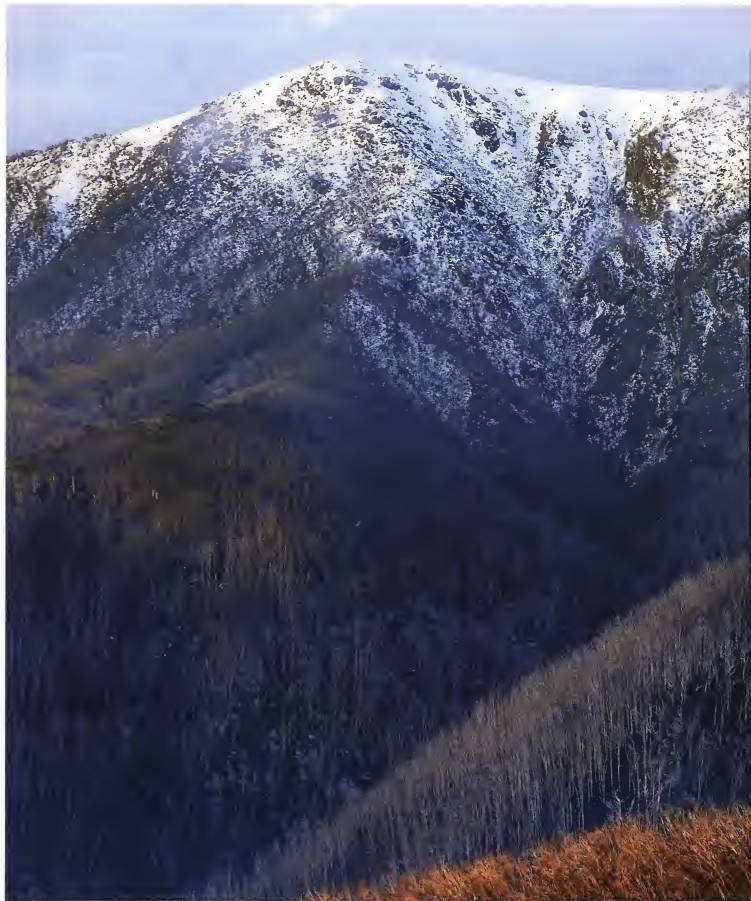


When Dave Gauldwell isn't asking for shit cake instead of chocolate cake in Pier's (that's the last time he'll get kaka and coco mixed up) he likes clambering up steep hills and getting his boots dirty whenever he can.



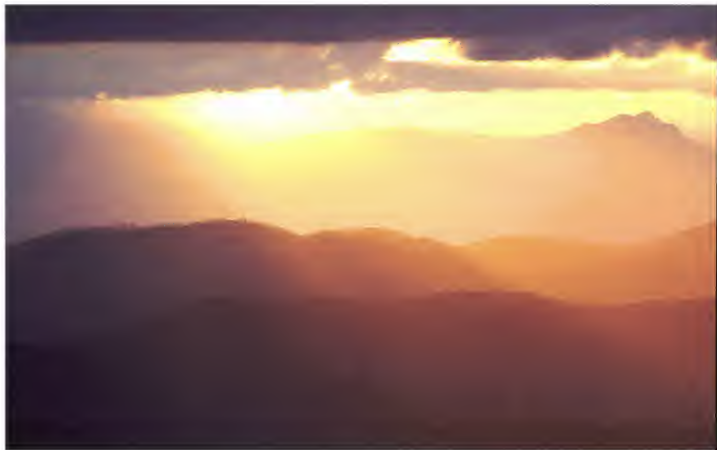
# The High Country

*Janusz Molinski* captures some of the magic of the Victorian Alps



*Mt Fainter from the North West Spur of Mt Feathertop.*

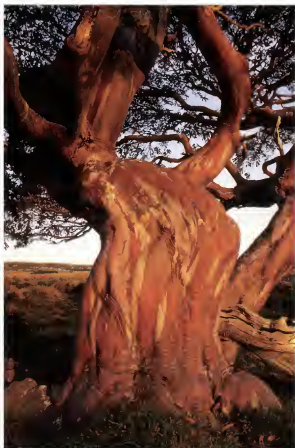




**Clockwise from above,** the view towards Mt Cobbler from Mt Feathertop. Mt Nelse Creek in winter. The twisted trunk of a snowgum near Mt Jim. The stark skeleton of a snowgum after a fire on Heathy Spur. Everlastings on Mt Feathertop.



Janusz Molinski is a Melbourne based photographer whose love of the Victorian Alps began 30 years ago. Inspired by pioneering efforts to establish an alpine national park system, he has photographed the Victorian Alps extensively and his photographs have been widely published.





# Cann Do *Attitude*

*Hugh de Kretser takes a stroll from the Cann River Hotel to the sea, contemplating the Indigenous history of the area along the way*

The ranger at the other end of the phone unwittingly laid down the challenge: 'I've never heard of anyone doing that before. It'll be pretty marshy and there'll be plenty of ticks...'

This was my last chance to head bush for a while as my wife and I were having our first baby. Having wandered well-marked tracks across Australia and overseas, I was up for a new challenge. Something off-track, requiring careful planning, stamina...and tweezers for tick removal.

The plan? To walk from the historic Cann River Hotel, down the Cann River, around Tamboon Inlet and out to the sea near Clinton Rocks. About 40 kilometres over three days through Victoria's beautiful Croajingolong National Park. Easy.

Well, maybe not. This walk posed a few problems; no track along the river, three

kilometres of bush bashing to reach the small hamlet of Tamboon Inlet and potentially more bush bashing if we weren't able to walk around the edge of the inlet to the sea (this depended on the tides, the water level and whether the sand bar at the inlet mouth was open).

Getting good intelligence on the route wasn't easy. The rangers gave us mixed messages. The ranger at Mallacoota said it was easy to walk around the inlet: the inlet mouth was open and the access track to the trackhead at Clinton Rocks was okay for two-wheel drive cars. The ranger at Cann River said it might be very tough going around the inlet: the inlet mouth was closed and the Clinton Rocks track was four-wheel drive only...

This ranger also suggested a novel method for removing ticks – the bane of all bushwalking in the area. She'd heard that if

you twist them clockwise many times, they 'became dizzy' and fell out. We had a laugh and I said I'd give it go. From past experience I fully expected that we'd attract plenty of ticks, and that we'd soon be bonding in the bush ritual of tick removal.

Given that my wife was seven months pregnant, she wasn't coming on this adventure. There's a relatively common vine in the area called 'lawyer vine', after its sharp thorns that clutch at you and draw blood. So it was appropriate that all three friends who joined me were lawyers: Ben, Tim and Martin. I'd only walked with Marty before, but Ben was an experienced bushman and Tim had spent time in the Army Reserve.

The walk was one way only. We tossed around a few car shuffle options before Tim offered to bring his mountain bike and ride it back from the end of the track.





On the 'Great Falls of the Cann'. Left, seabag  
jocks; here, the Cann river. Right, from left  
Ben, Marty and Tim. All photos by the author.

Marty was sceptical, but we decided to give it a go.

So, after piling into Tim's four-wheel drive on a Friday after work, we drove down to the Cann River Hotel from Melbourne. With poor timing we arrived just after the bar closed. The rooms we'd booked upstairs might have optimistically been described as 'spartan', but the owners were super helpful and the rates cheap.

At 6am the next morning Tim got up to do the shuffle; I turned over and fell back asleep. At about 8.30am he arrived back, sweaty but enthusiastic, having driven to the end of the walk and then ridden his bike back. By 11am, after the usual packing and unpacking, debating about how much food to take and leaving our extra gear at the pub, we were ready to go. We walked to the nearby Princes Highway bridge over the Cann River, ducked under it and were on our way.

It was the start of summer, the sun was shining brightly amidst the odd fluffy cloud and there was a cool breeze – a beautiful day for a stroll. The river was about 20 centimetres deep and a couple of metres wide, its crystal clear water flowing nicely as it wound its way through a broad sweep of sand, with gently sloping banks rising on either side.

At first, the odd beer bottle and glimpse of farmland reminded us we weren't far from civilisation. We came across a single

wire fence draped across the river. I wondered if it was electrified, doubted it, touched it to confirm it wasn't live and stepped over it. I did the same with the next fence. On the third fence, just as I was straddling it, my innermost haunch brushed the fence and a deeply unsettling electricity

**'We described the next two hours in explorer-language as 'purgatory', 'interminable' and 'insufferable'. The hostile bush closed in around us. The gullies were choked with head-high sword grass, which sliced open any exposed flesh.'**

charge ploughed through my body. Thankfully, my wife was already pregnant.

The next brush with danger came shortly after when an enormous red-bellied black snake reared up a couple of metres away before slowly sliding off.

As time passed, the bottles and farms disappeared and the forest rose up around us. A huge roo strode off and a sea eagle circled overhead. We stopped for lunch in a gorgeous spot, removing our wet, sandy boots and dipping our feet in a pool next

to some flowering bottlebrush. Marty quickly shed all his clothes apart from an unusually small pair of jocks and plonked himself in one of the waist deep pools, but it wasn't enough to put us off our food.

The beautiful walking made for some nice chats. Ben talked about his recent visit to some of the Indigenous communities around Alice Springs where he was working on human rights issues connected with the Northern Territory Intervention. Our chat soon moved on to the Indigenous history of the local area in East Gippsland (see box inset).

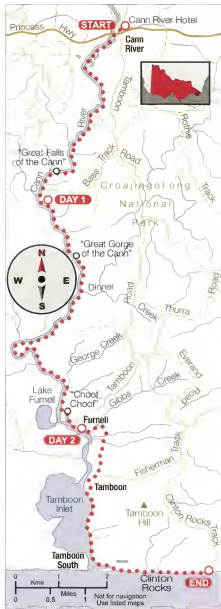
We walked on down the river and came to some unnamed waterfalls (the 'Great Falls of the Cann' perhaps?), which would be quite impressive after some serious rain. Further down, part of what looked like an old wooden bridge was jammed in some rocks, showing that from time to time this river has some force.

We swam at a lovely deep pool, walked for a while longer and then made camp in the early evening. There was a wealth of stunning campsites to choose from along the sandy banks, and the one we selected will linger in the memory: a wide sandy verge, clear water flowing gently nearby and tall timber towering over either bank.

Ben supplied the entree (pizza shapes), Marty fixed up some tortellini, Tim pulled out some wine, I provided the Spanish sherry and nature turned on the stars.



*In the thick of it, from left, Tim, Ben and Marty - and...is that Gabrielle? Right, Tim preparing breakfast.*



We rose early the next day. Marty and his wife are fond of old-school explorer talk on walks, and he soon succumbed, declaring, diary-style, 'Day two, spirits are high.' As we set off, we were soon following suit.

We encountered our first real difficulty when the river narrowed. The water was deep and the bush was thick on either side. We made it through by wading as far as we could and then bush bashing along the banks. A water dragon bolted off as we approached and we saw the first of some large freshwater fish.

The banks soon became steeper, the rocks larger and the going slower. We were perhaps travelling only one or two kilometres an hour and started to wonder if we would make our second night's destination. At an unnamed and impressive steep gorge (the 'Great Gorge of the Cann' perhaps?) there was plenty of scrambling and boulder hopping. The river then widened and the going became easier. We paused for lunch in another stunning spot, and Marty was quickly in his jocks in the water again.

After lunch, deep wading and bush bashing became the norm. We said hello to a goanna and wombat and saw fish everywhere, jumping and darting out of the shallows. I tasted the water – it was brackish – and quickly filled a three-litre bladder so we had some emergency supplies. A pelican crunched down and splash landed ahead of us.

At this point things got tricky. We were aiming for a place called 'Choo! Choo!', a tiny campsite off a branch of the river near the start of the inlet. Following the river's edge was a longer route, so we decided to head in a direct line through the bush, using the map, a compass and Marty's GPS.

We described the next two hours in

explorer-language as 'purgatory', 'interminable' and 'insufferable'. The hostile bush closed in around us. The gullies were choked with head-high sword grass, which sliced open any exposed flesh. We skirted rotting melaleuca swamps. Whenever we stopped to check the map, swarms of mosquitoes descended to attack us. These mosquitoes were so highly evolved they were able to land on and pierce our faces as we moved. Worse still, the GPS wasn't working as the trees overhead prevented us getting a reading.

Eventually, with luck, perseverance and a timely GPS reading, we hit the dirt road about 50 metres up from Choo! Choo!. The family camping there greeted us with a plate of corn chips. Doritos had never tasted so good.

We walked on along an easy path to Furnells Landing where we dropped our packs, exhausted. There were a few people launching or picking up boats and we contemplated trying to hitch a ride somewhere closer to our destination. After a fire, wine, Bombay masala and sherry, our spirits picked up. They were raised even further as we sat on the small jetty in the dark, listening to the plunk of leaping mullet and watching the water light up with amazing disco phosphorescence.

Day three and we awoke with trepidation at the thought of more bush bashing. We found a four-wheel drive track that led in the right direction. It raised our hopes but then petered out into nothing, and before long we were once again being sliced apart by sword grass and even some friendly lawyer vine having a go at its own.

We tried, where possible, to keep to the

ridges and distracted ourselves with banter. The mosquitoes were something to behold. We wondered if humans had overly maligned them. Maybe these humble insects in their impressive hordes could be marketed as a tourist attraction (the 'Great Mosquito Spawning of the Cann' perhaps?). One particular insect, who I named Gabrielle, kept buzzing in my ear, amusing me with his delightful chit chat. I swatted him dead and bloody with my sweat-soaked hat. We were becoming delirious. This was a test of character.

Finally, after close to three hours, we hit the dirt road that took us down to the campground and a cluster of houses at the Tamboon Inlet hamlet. Roy, a local we bumped into, told us what we wanted to hear: it was an easy walk to the inlet mouth. His words were music to our ears.

We chatted a while longer and found out he ran the local winery in Cann River. Noticing a bandage on his leg, I asked him



if he'd come a cropper with a snake. He hadn't, but said that he did get bitten the year before by a king brown. His wife drove him to Orbost hospital, but he never felt any side effects and was fine. He asked where we'd come from. When we told him he said, 'Jeez, you blokes should be in Afghanistan.' We took it as a compliment.

The last section of the walk was a delight. It took about an hour to skirt the edge of the inlet, with a bit of rock hopping and wading. The mozzies disappeared and we passed a couple of nice 'boat access only' campsites. The huge dunes on the other side of the inlet mouth were spectacular. I tried to convince my comrades that this was where they filmed the Coke commercial where the young beautiful people in bikinis and board shorts roll down the dune in the inflatable Coke bottle. They didn't buy it.

At the beach, we turned left and a couple of hours later we were at the big granite boulders of Clinton Rocks. A battered shell jumped off a rock and into the water. We came across two big Indigenous shell middens, stopping at the second: a good spot for a final bite to eat.

The trackhead for the Clinton Rocks Track ran off a beautiful beach. The lighthouse at Point Hicks jutted out on the horizon. This was the first point on the Australian mainland seen by Captain Cook

in 1770 and named after Lieutenant Hicks who was the first to see it. Apparently Cook's diary for the day reads, 'Day 623, Spirits are high...'

We ditched our packs and had a final swim, the salt water cleaning out the multitude of cuts and scratches. From there it was a short stroll up the dune to where the car was waiting.

Back at the Cann River Hotel, over a beer and some chips, we asked the friendly barman if he had any of Roy's wine. He said he did and Tim bought a couple of bottles. About to inspect the label, Tim jokingly commented, 'I bet it is an elegant wine', to which the barman quickly replied, 'Yeah, it used to say "it tastes like shit" on the back but it didn't sell too well.' He then launched into a story about chatting up a French backpacker.

We were spent but satisfied. We'd walked from the Cann River Hotel to the sea. This had been a walk to remember, with memorable company. And best of all, we didn't see a single tick. **W**

Over numerous trips to East Gippsland, *Hugh de Kretser* has encountered his fair share of bush ticks, lodging themselves in his back, his belly button and worse. Now a father, he recently offered up his son to the tick gods on a camping trip there. Fortunately, they went hungry.

### Walking on Kurnai Country

Stretching across most of the Gippsland region, Kurnai country takes in some of Victoria's most spectacular wild places. Croajingolong National Park's name itself is derived from the name of a Kurnai (also written Gunai) clan and Indigenous history can be seen throughout the park, in shell middens and in trees scarred where bark was removed for canoes and shelters.

I'd been camping and hiking in Gippsland since I was a kid. On an overnight bushwalk a few years back, I fell asleep in a beautiful spot after lunch just off the beach. I woke to find I was lying next to a midden, where the local Kurnai had been eating shellfish for thousands of years, discarding the shells to form a heap that still remained there today.

The realisation jolted me. Despite being drawn by the natural beauty of the area for years, I knew little or nothing about its Indigenous history.

Returning from the walk, I tried to rectify the situation. The journey eventually led me to Rob Andy, a Kurnai man who is passionate about preserving his culture and sharing his knowledge with others. Rob has been developing an Indigenous tourism and education business, building on his previous job running cultural canoe tours around Lake Tyers where he grew up.

Rob's passion for his culture comes through strong – whether it's talking about his childhood at Lake Tyers, telling the Kurnai Dreamtime stories and explaining the morals behind them, or talking about the flora and fauna of the area and how the Kurnai used them.

His advice to walkers and others wanting to learn about Kurnai history and culture is to visit the Krowathunkoolong Keeping Place in Bairnsdale, which houses a good collection of artefacts and exhibits. The Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne has excellent interactive displays on the Indigenous culture and history of the broader South Eastern Australia region. There's also some good books on Gippsland's Indigenous history; Don Watson's *Caledonia Australia*, or Carolyn Landon's *Jackson's Truck and Jackson's Truck Revisited*.

For Rob, his culture is about identity and feeling part of the land, 'It's a sense of belonging that makes you feel proud to be Indigenous.'



Off-track walking in the mighty Chewings Ranges, Northern Territory. Ian Brown

# The Off-track *Dilemma*

With an abundance of bushwalking tracks to choose from and the increasing spread of deadly plant diseases, are the off-track expeditions of our bushwalking pioneers a distant memory? Or is off-track walking alive and well? *Bron Willis* delves into the who, how and why of this adventurous style of walking

## Adventure

### 1. undertaking of uncertain outcome 2. a hazardous enterprise.

*Macquarie Dictionary of Australia*

On the morning of Good Friday, 1952, Paddy Pallin and five companions stood talking to the farmer upon whose land they had made their camp at Saltwater Creek, near the Shoalhaven River in southern NSW. After sweet-talking the farmer out of his first angry objection to their unwelcome stop on his farm, they told him of their plan to walk across the Ettrema Gorge, a spectacular ravine in an area since protected as the Ettrema Wilderness Area in 2002.

'It can't be done,' the farmer told them, as Pallin recounted in his book of outdoor recollections, *Never Truly Lost*, published in

1987, three years before his death in 1991.

'It can't be done.' Was there ever a phrase more likely to heighten the determination of a group of spirited adventurers, laden with heavy packs before an expedition?

Pallin's account of what followed describes the four-day journey during which the men proved the impossible was possible. Searching for a route through the seemingly impregnable walls guarding Ettrema Gorge, the men used only a sketch map and an aerial photograph of the gorge. As the futility of their planned route became apparent, they adopted a trial-and-error approach, exploring creek lines and ledges until they found a way down, back up and then out. Four days, numerous creek crossings, plenty of scrub-bashing and one unexpected swim later, wrote Pallin, the men emerged battered, bruised and victorious. They were the first

party to make the crossing.

For the pioneers of the 1950s outdoors scene, this was bushwalking. For many of Pallin's contemporaries, the aim was adventure: the temptation was to be the first to tread in an area little-known to white man, the first to find a route, the only ones to breathe in that particular pocket of pristine air, and see all around a world untrodden by modernity.

Today, among the streets of gear shops and the throngs of people seeking release from a busy lifestyle, we still seek adventure. But with a plethora of tracks to choose from, accessible campsites and shelves of guidebooks and maps, modern-day bushwalking might seem a vastly different undertaking than the expeditions of Paddy Pallin, Myles Dunphy and other pioneering greats of the 1930s to 1960s.





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But is it? While the number of tracks continues to grow and governments, tourism bodies and outdoor businesses recognise the value of the adventure market, some bushwalkers still seek the challenge and solitude of off-track walking. For some, the challenge of finding and navigating a route is as appealing as the unknown treasures that lie in the destination, untrampled by scores of boots and unseen on the covers of travel and outdoor magazines.

What proportion of the outdoors population regularly seeks this kind of bushwalking is unclear, but of the 187 *Wild* readers who responded to a survey on the topic earlier this year, 85 said they had done five or more walks that were mostly off-track. Rogainers and adventure racers who enjoy the navigational challenge of walking off-track had a presence in the survey, as well as club walkers who invited readers to take up the challenge of this more adventurous style of walking with their local club. Whatever your take, its proponents are unimpressed by the suggestion that off-track walking is a dying pastime.

One such advocate is Colin Farley, 71, from Brisbane. As a 12-year-old, Farley loved to explore. The Organ Pipes and Keilor Creek, which he said are now 'the back blocks of Melbourne, but at that time were somewhat wilder than they are today', offered the boy hours of unfettered exploration, where Farley followed his nose, going where his boots took him, returning when he'd found his way back out just before dark.

Fifty-five years later, nothing has changed. Farley still loves to explore and off-track walking is regularly on the outdoor menu.

He leads off-track walking trips with the K2 Extreme Bushwalking Club, usually attracting the interest of more walkers than he can take with him (group numbers are kept low in order to reduce the environmental impact). Walkers come from a broad age range, including many in their 20s and 30s, right through to his own age. 'Within the larger walking clubs there are still cores of people that actively do exploration trips off-track, as much as there ever was,' he says. 'People like the challenge of using the skills that they've got, and also they love to get away from people.'

Over the years, Farley's love of off-track walking has seen him on extended trips in Tasmania's Southwest National Park and the Victorian Alps, but some of his off-track walking trips are closer to home. 'I went for a day of walking in an untracked area just over an hour from Brisbane recently with my daughter, and for the 13 hours we were walking, we didn't see another soul.'

Farley regularly uses technology to aid his trip planning. 'Often I have a look at the aerial views on Google maps or Near Map and I choose a particular area that I'm interested in. I zoom in and think, yeah, that ridge looks interesting, maybe we should go and have a look at that, and just see if it's possible to get up there.' Soaking up a unique bush experience is important to Farley, who learnt off-track walking 'from the masters in the Victorian Mountain Tramping Club, quite an adventurous group of people.'

'Because very few people are likely to go there, you're having very little impact on the environment, and you come across little gems in the environment that you wouldn't

have come across any other way...once when I was walking off-track in the Dandenongs I stumbled across a lyrebird doing his courtship dance – extending his superb tail feathers down and over his head, and going through his full repertoire of songs whilst performing a dance. I stood there for over half an hour, watching the display. That wouldn't have happened if I was walking in a more frequented area.'

The issue of environmental impact is often raised by critics of off-track walking. While some survey respondents, similarly to Farley, believe the small numbers of people walking off-track means minimal environmental impact, others ask the question 'if everyone who bushwalked did so off-track at least some of the time, wouldn't the damage soon add up?'

Andrew Peters answers that question with an emphatic 'yes'. Peters started his career as a vet but soon discovered a passion for treating injured and sick wildlife at a private practice in southern Sydney, where for three years, he volunteered up to 1000 hours a year to work closely with Australian wildlife. Peters has focused his passion into the impact of infectious diseases and is completing his PhD in the movement of infectious organisms in migratory birds at Charles Sturt University. The 31-year-old is also a great lover of the outdoors whose work has taken him to areas as remote and varied as the Top End, Cape York, the Gulf of Carpentaria and New Guinea. He is very happy about the fact that he spends four to six months of the year living in the bush and understands intimately the joys of the off-track walking experience.

'It's wonderful to look around you 360° and see no trace of humankind and realise that we are a really small player. That's humbling and really, really enjoyable. That's what gets me up to the mountains when it's snowy. You wake up and there's not even a footprint and it romantically takes us back to a time when we didn't have the effects that we have on the world now.'

But what concerns Peters is the potential impact of careless or uninformed walkers who step out off track. 'We have a huge responsibility to make sure that we don't move organisms from one area, we don't move viruses, fungi or parasites – and the number one way that happens is through soil on our equipment.'

Peters is particularly concerned about two major cases that have highlighted the spread of organisms through walking in the last 20 years. Wild readers may be familiar with the first – *Phytophthora*, or cinnamon fungus – which management groups are struggling to contain in Tasmania's Southwest National Park



An off-track walker's delight; thick scrub approaching the middle Crossing River, Southwest Tasmania. Peter Kaldor



Crossing the lower Cracroft River in Southwest Tasmania. Kaldor. Right, Peter Kaldor buried in typical Southwest 'Tassie scrub'. Carl Johnston



and Western Australia's Fitzgerald National Park. Peters' expertise is honed on a lesser-known, but even more threatening fungus.

'Chytrid fungus is one of the world's greatest threats to amphibian diversity. Five hundred of the world's frog species have suffered extinction or spectacular decline in the last 20 to 30 years, and of those 200 are directly attributable to chytrid fungus, including many extinctions worldwide and two in Australia. It has managed to access extraordinarily remote areas including some very pristine, high mountain streams where it tends to be the worst in terms of its effects. It particularly likes wet, cold environments. In many of those areas, frogs are basically functionally extinct. The finger has turned around and for many of those areas the only logical explanation is either by walkers or biologists.'

Peters contests the thinking that small numbers make the risk minimal. 'What we understand about the movement of infectious organisms is that the individuals that move a lot to unusual places are the ones who play a disproportionate role in the rapid spread of these organisms. Just the fact that you are exceptional in going out a lot to unusual places makes you the most likely candidate for spreading these organisms.'

'I don't think off-track walking will ever stop, or that necessarily it should stop, but I do think that if you do it you should treat the responsibility very seriously, very delicately. Washing your gear of soil and limiting your access to areas where very few people go, is an easy solution.'

But with fewer and fewer opportunities, and – from Peters' point of view – good reasons not to set foot on an uncharted

piece of Australian soil, is it becoming harder to experience true adventure, like that which stirred the imaginations of Paddy Pallin and his walking friends in the first half of the century?

Rob Pallin thinks not. Pallin, 68, is Paddy Pallin's youngest son, executive chairman of the Paddy Pallin Group of outdoor stores and co-director of the Paddy Pallin Foundation. 'I think adventure is alive and well. You don't need to be the first person to visit a place to experience adventure. It doesn't have the same feeling of "maybe you're the first European to stand in this place", but if it's the first time you've been there, that is what matters. Every new valley and river you go to is a new adventure.'

It seems likely that Rob's take on adventure is one his father would have embraced – although Paddy cherished the excitement of journeying to new and untracked places, he loved to share those experiences with others. According to Rob, Paddy always wrote notes from his trips, eagerly shared them with others, as well as encouraging others to find their own style of adventure, through his retail business.

The notion of adventure on one's own terms is embraced by many of today's outdoor lovers, who don't feel the need to go farthest, quickest or first to get their fill of adventure. While expeditioners around the world continue to seek new ways to push the boundaries – by foot, bicycle, kayak or ski – others find that any step out of the comfort of the modern world and on to the open walking track, leaves the door wide open to possibility.

Off-track walking, whether it be in the form of a completely untracked route, or one

that includes off-track elements, is certainly one way to push those doors a little wider. Martin Hawes, wilderness photographer and off-track walker, has an interesting take.

'Track walking subtly affects one's psychology, and hence one's perception of wilderness: you see the landscape in terms of start and destination, what lies to the left and right. Tracks lead you by the hand, so to speak. When you walk off-track you experience landscape in a pristine state, and are obliged to 'read' it and move through it entirely on its own terms.'

Perhaps it is the fact that off-track walking requires more from the mind, and more from the body, which attracts its fans most. In *Never Truly Lost*, Paddy Pallin ponders the need for something more physically challenging. 'Maybe bushwalkers are masochists at heart,' he says, 'or possibly there are so few physical challenges left in our usual coddled, civilised lives that something deep inside us seeks out such tests.'

Whatever the reason, off-track walking looks unlikely to die, even if it remains the niche of the connoisseur. Why? In the words of one survey participant, 'Waking early to the dawn chorus and looking out of the tent flap on a landscape with no obvious human interference gives a feeling of contentment that nothing else can provide.' Or another, 'We were once wild animals, it's in our blood to get away from traffic lights and stop signs to feel your senses come alive again.' **W**

*Bron Willie is a Melbourne writer, editor and bushwalker who is fascinated by people's experience of adventure and the outdoors. She produces publications for Bush Heritage Australia and treasures the peace and beauty of walking in the wilderness of Tasmania and Victoria.*

# Cooking with *Spices*

In the second of his series of articles on food for lightweight bushwalking, *Andrew Davison* talks spices

**D**innertime childhood memories for me fall into one category: meat and three vegetables. The scent that permeated from the family kitchen was of grilled leathery chops rimmed by a white slug-like piece of fat or a brown glop of jelly like mincemeat served with boiled green beans and a scoop of mashed potatoes.

I was quite young when I noted that a delicious meal usually consists of more than three colours and that seasoning didn't just have to be salt and pepper. However, in my parents' defence, on special occasions they did put half a teaspoon of curry powder from that orange square box in a meal to spice things up.

On leaving the world of mince and muttonchops and moving into my own house, a world of different cuisines opened

before me in the form of recipe books. There was one book in particular that took hold of me, *The Spices of India*. The glossy pictures not only made the meals look delicious, the recipes themselves inspired culinary creations for extended walks. I noted that with a blend of lightweight spices simple ingredients could be transformed into superb delights. A little cumin could be all that is required to turn a simple bowl of lentils into a tasty meal, or a blend of sweet spices could make what would essentially be boiled rice into something delicious.

After years of experimenting and adapting recipes and even a trip to the source of the inspiration, India, I now use spice in almost all of my walking dishes: lightweight and packed with flavour, they are ideal for bush cuisine.

## SPICY RICE AND PEAS

Serves: two

This is an extremely easy meal to prepare. Although simple, it is packed with flavour. The cooking process can be simplified further by placing all ingredients in a pot with 2 ½ cups of water, however omitting frying the spices will mean losing some of the flavours that are enhanced by frying.

### Ingredients

- 1 dessert spoon of oil
- 5 cloves
- ½ cinnamon stick
- 5 cardamom pods
- 1 teaspoon of cumin seeds
- ½ teaspoon of turmeric
- 1 cup of rice (basmati)
- 1/3 cup of dried peas
- 2 dessert spoons of dried onion or one small onion
- 1 teaspoon of dried garlic or three fresh cloves

### AT HOME

Pack the cloves, cinnamon stick, cardamom, cumin seeds and turmeric powder together. Pack the rice, peas, dried onion and garlic together.

### IN THE FIELD

Heat the oil in a pot. Add spices (and chopped onion and garlic if you are using fresh) and fry for one minute. Now add 2½ cups of water, rice, peas, dried onion and garlic and stir. Cover and simmer over low heat until rice is cooked and peas are rehydrated, adding more water if necessary.

### TIP

Frying spices enhances the flavour of them, however sometimes oil can be messy or unavailable. If so, try heating a spoon of water to a rapid boil in a pot, add the spices and stir into a thick gravy, frying slightly before quickly adding the next ingredients.

Spicy rice and peas. All photos by the author





## SPICED BEANS AND TOMATOES

Serves: two

In all my recipes I prefer to use the dried tomatoes that are found in jars of oil as they are usually softer and richer in flavour. Try avoiding semi-dried tomatoes as they do not keep as long.

### Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons of cumin seeds
- 1 dried red chilli (chopped)
- 2 teaspoons of coriander powder
- 1 teaspoon of cumin powder
- 10 dried tomatoes in oil (chopped)
- ¼ cup of dried green beans
- 1 teaspoon dried garlic (or 3 fresh cloves)
- 3 teaspoons of lemon juice
- salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ cup water

**Above and right**, the author's partner, Leah O'Neill, preparing dinner in Mongolia.

### AT HOME

Pack cumin seeds, red chilli, coriander and cumin powder together.  
Pack beans and garlic together.

### IN THE FIELD

Place tomatoes with their oil in pan and heat, add spices (and chopped fresh garlic if you are using it). Stir continuously for 20 to 30 seconds. Add water and beans. Boil until beans are rehydrated, then add lemon, pepper and salt to taste. Serve over rice.

*Andrew Davison* takes pleasure in the simplicity of being in the bush. He currently resides in Mongolia and thinks himself fortunate to reside in a nation with an abundance of untouched walking destinations.



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# Trekking Training

**Alex Shirley demonstrates some simple stretches and exercises that will help alleviate the back and shoulder pain experienced from carrying a heavy pack**

**Do you love going for bushwalks** but find that your upper back and shoulders really don't enjoy carrying a pack? Many people avoid going on extended walks because of this discomfort, or simply put up with the pain and accept it as a natural part of the trekking or bushwalking experience. Luckily it doesn't have to be this way. Regularly carrying out just three key stretches and one simple strength exercise can significantly reduce the tension in these muscles and ensure that bushwalking with a pack is a much more enjoyable experience.

The human body is designed to be upright. In the modern world, however, we spend a great deal of time sitting for extended periods and this unnatural position causes some of our muscles to shorten and tighten, and others to lengthen and weaken. This process

gradually brings our muscles out of balance and can lead to poor posture. If you just look around you, most people today have a head that sticks slightly forward and rounded shoulders – compare that to young children who stand tall and upright, or African tribesmen walking straight with heavy loads on their heads. The poor posture of a modern lifestyle is a major contributing factor in the upper back and shoulder discomfort experienced when carrying a pack.

So how do we correct these imbalances? By stretching our tight muscles and strengthening our weak muscles we can help to improve our posture and allow our bodies to work more efficiently – this will then greatly reduce muscle tension, enhancing your trek!

The following exercises have been designed specifically to help with upper back and shoulder issues from carrying a pack.



## NECK EXTENSOR STRETCH

- Maintaining good posture, drop your shoulders away from your ears.
- Tuck your chin and roll your head forward until your chin meets your chest (imagine you are creating a 'double chin').
- Hold for 20 to 30 seconds, repeat two to three times.
- Always move through a pain-free range!
- Move slowly.



## UPPER TRAPS STRETCH

- Sit on a Swiss ball or bench with good posture and hold out your left arm to the side.
- Tuck your chin in and slowly draw your right ear to your right shoulder until a moderate stretch is felt.
- Hold at first resistance barrier for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat two to three times and then swap sides.





### CHEST STRETCH

- Start in a kneeling position.
- Place your right forearm on a Swiss ball or on a chair with your palm down and shoulder parallel to the floor.
- Maintaining optimal posture, allow your chest to slowly drop downward.
- Hold at first resistance barrier for 20 to 30 seconds, relax and move into newly acquired range of movement, repeat two to three times.

Ideally you want to carry out these stretches daily. Performing them first thing in the morning or just before going to bed will give the best results. When you are heading out on a bushwalk, carry out the stretches before you walk, when you rest and when you get to your destination – they only take two to three minutes and the short time they take to perform is well worth it.

The following strength exercise is designed to strengthen the postural muscles of your upper back. It should be carried out two to three times each week and can be included at the end of any fitness training or walking that you do.

### PRONE COBRA

- Lie face down on the floor in a prone position, with your arms just in front of your hips.
- Activate your core by drawing in your belly button towards your spine and squeeze your glutes (bottom) together.
- With your core and glutes activated and your chin tucked into the chest, lift your chest off the floor, lift your arms up and back towards the hips rotating thumbs towards the ceiling.
- Pause for five to ten seconds at the top of the lift then return to the starting position; at all times keeping the chin tucked into the chest. Upon completion of the movement, repeat ten to 15 times.
- Don't over-emphasise the arching of the back to lift the chest off the floor – try and lengthen through the crown of your head instead. No lower back pain should be felt during this exercise.



In addition to carrying out these exercises it is very important to gradually get used to carrying a pack before you head out on a big trek or bushwalk. You can't just expect your body to suddenly adapt to carrying a heavy pack if you don't normally wear one. Ideally you want to start going out for training walks with a light rucksack weighing around four to five kilograms. You will then want to gradually increase this weight over a ten to 12 week period, slowly building up to the pack weight that you will be using on your walk. Rather than shocking your body with a heavy pack it isn't used to and potentially causing yourself an injury, this will give your body time to adapt and strengthen so that you can

comfortably head off on your trek. Imagine how great you will feel the next time you go for a long bushwalk when you have carried out these quick and simple exercises!

Alex Shirley runs *PrimalFit*, an outdoor fitness service based in Sydney that specialises in training clients for challenging trekking expeditions like Kokoda, Everest Base Camp, Kilimanjaro or the Oxfam Trailwalker. [primalfit.com.au](http://primalfit.com.au)



# Up Close and Personal

Craig Ingram outlines a professional approach to macro photography

*To ensure the near and far petals of this pink water lily were in focus, I used the depth of field preview button to see what was sharp, then adjusted the aperture accordingly. All photos by the author*

**M**acro photography is the art of photographing small subjects. Shooting the world in miniature creates new photographic possibilities, opening your eyes to a unique world that many people just walk right past. However, macro photography also creates a number of technical difficulties. All the problems of everyday photography are exacerbated when shooting up close. The following offers a few tips to help tackle these problems as you enter the world of macro photography.

The easiest way to get into macro photography is to purchase a dedicated macro lens. A macro lens is simply a lens that focuses extremely close, normally defined by the fact it can focus on a subject so that it appears the same size on the sensor as it is in real life (a 1:1 reproduction ratio). A macro lens is far from essential but it does offer greater convenience due to the fact it will focus at very close range without having to add any modifiers. You can be shooting distant horizons one minute and a tiny flower the next.

Extension tubes are another way to get

your lens to focus on smaller subjects. To focus on near subjects the lens needs to be moved further away from the film plane. Extension tubes are just tubes of air that fit between the camera body and the lens, moving the whole lens assembly away from the film plane and allowing you to focus closer than the normal minimum focusing distance of the lens.

**'A tripod is essential for macro photography due to the small apertures required to increase what is often a limited depth of field.'**

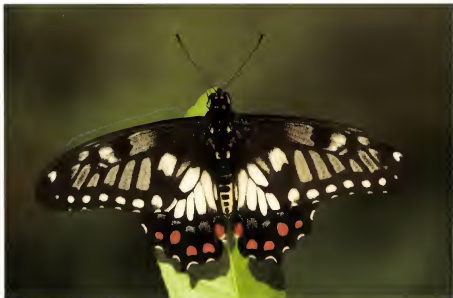
The downside is that you have to remove the tubes to focus on distant subjects. Also, if you zoom the lens to adjust composition, the focus will change. Therefore, extension tubes are best for fixed focal length lenses.

A better solution for zoom lenses is to use a magnifying dioptre. These are

essentially magnifying glasses that you screw on to your lens. As with extension tubes you cannot focus on distant objects. You will have less focal range than with an extension tube, but because it modifies the image before it hits the lens, you can zoom without altering the focal point. Due to its small size the magnifying dioptre is a great lightweight option for walkers. Make sure you look for a two element dioptre: they are not cheap, but the quality of the resulting images make them worth the expense.

A tripod is essential for macro photography due to the small apertures required to increase what is often a limited depth of field. You will regularly find yourself shooting in dark locations that necessitate long shutter speeds. A sturdy tripod that can work easily at ground level is a must. Many tripods can reverse the centre column to get close to the ground but it is better to use one without a centre column (see the last issue of *Wild* for more advice on tripods).

In macro photography we regularly shoot at very small camera to subject distances (sometimes just a few



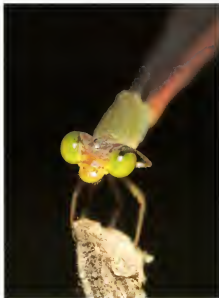
centimetres with long lenses), which leads to a very shallow depth of field (the amount of the scene in focus). To counteract this we need to use smaller apertures to get a greater depth of field, but this creates its own problems. The aperture is also affected by the close focusing so that at f22 the effective aperture is actually f45, a very tiny hole indeed, which causes the light to be diffracted, creating a blurry image and more problems than you started with. So it is best to stick with mid-range apertures between f8 and f16.

With such a narrow depth of field, you need to use the sharpness you do have to your advantage. You have to decide on what is the most important part of the image and make sure that it falls into the area that is in focus. This is easy with animals as it is always the eye. It doesn't matter if the abdomen of the bee is out of focus as long as the eye (a very important communication device in photography) is sharp. You can maximise the narrow depth of field by paralleling the subject to the film plane. If you shoot a butterfly head on, only a narrow band will fall into the focal range, but if you shoot it from the side or above you can place the entire body inside those few millimetres in focus.

Shooting on the same level as your subject generally creates more pleasing, intimate images, and macro photography is no exception. Shooting animals at their eye level gives us a different perspective than we are used to (at human eye-level) and allows the viewer to enter their world. It also moves the background further away from the subject relative to the camera. The background is then more out of focus allowing the subject to stand out in the frame.

Shooting macro subjects can be done at

*By paralleling this chequered swallowtail butterfly I was able to maximise what little depth of field available. Right, as can be seen in this shot of a big red damselfly, it's always critical to have the eyes in focus.*



any time of day. You are not limited to the golden hours of sunrise and sunset as with landscape photography (although it is still nice). You can shoot all day and because of the size of your subjects you can modify the light to suit yourself. You can simply use a diffuser (a white translucent screen), to spread the light, giving a softer more pleasing effect. Alternatively you can use a reflector which bounces light back into the frame, brightening the shadows. These can either be a manufactured product from a camera store or homemade. A piece of crumpled up aluminium foil glued to some card works wonders as a diffuser.

### 'One of the most important tips for macro photography is to know your subject.'

You can also modify the light by using a flash. It has to be an off-camera flash, so the light will hit the subject (most built in flashes will miss the subject as it is so close to the lens). Modern flashes are more than powerful enough to light a macro scene at f16 and when used with a diffuser, produce a pleasing light source.

One of the most important tips for macro photography is to know your subject. You are going to make life very hard for yourself if you go out to take photos of dragonflies at midday. As an example, insects are cold blooded and take a while to heat up and become active. Therefore it is easier to approach them early in the morning when they are less active and often not active at all.

Knowing what is flowering and when before you leave the house will lead to better images than all the camera equipment in the world. Camera equipment is, after all, just a tool to help you capture the images that are already out there.

### A Macro Photographer's Quick Checklist

- Once you have located a subject note its position in relation to the sun.
- Check for any damage to the subject (broken petals, torn wings). If it is damaged move on, unless it is extremely rare.
- Look for any foreground distractions and try to avoid them with your camera angle.
- Are you going to have to modify the light? If so, how?
- Look for the best plane of focus to maximise depth of field and adjust the camera angle so it is parallel to it.
- Depress the depth of field preview button to see what it is going to look like in the final image, scanning the edges of the viewfinder to check for stray elements in the frame.
- Set any exposure compensation and fire away.

Craig Ingram is an Adelaide-based nature photographer and writer. He believes that sharing his passion for the outdoors and photography can help to educate and protect our wilderness areas. For more info about upcoming photography workshops go to [craigingramphoto.com.au](http://craigingramphoto.com.au)

# Peaks, Plains and Valleys of the Bogong High Plains

Passing some of Victoria's highest peaks, this stunning circuit walk traverses high ridges, grassy plains and tranquil valleys in the Victorian Alps

Word and photos by *Glenn van der Knijff*

Victoria's second-tallest peak, Mt Feathertop, has long been a popular destination for bushwalkers, as has the Bogong High Plains. But linking the two is not easy: the waters of the West Kiewa River have cut a deeply incised valley between the two making a traverse a strenuous proposition. Despite – or because of – this, a journey through this region is a wonderful experience, giving walkers the chance to experience a variety of landscapes with a few challenges thrown in.

First visited by Indigenous people more than 5000 years ago, the Bogong High Plains region was not 'discovered' by Europeans until

around the mid-1800s. One of the first recorded visits was in 1851 by two stockmen, Jim Brown and Jack Wells. They named many of today's well-known features, including Mt Feathertop and Mt Jim, and cut the area's first stock routes. Gold was discovered shortly after and by the 1880s graziers and miners began to populate the area. As the turn of the century approached bushwalking became a popular pastime and walkers were lured to the region in increasing numbers by the beauty of the mountains. By the 1920s, bushwalking was booming in Victoria and it's an activity that's remained popular in the

region to this day.

This reasonably hard three-day walk follows the route of many early bushwalkers and begins with a stroll to the head of the Razorback, before a traverse of this popular walking route leads to Mt Feathertop. A tough descent into the West Kiewa valley precedes a steep climb to the Bogong High Plains, before reaching the gentle terrain of the headwaters of the Bundara River. The final day involves a descent into the serene valley of the Cobungra River, home to a delightful snow plain, and culminates with a steep ascent up Swindlers Spur to Mt Hotham.

## WHEN TO GO

Snow covers the peaks during winter, so the warmer months from late spring through to April/May are best for walking. While the weather is usually fine and warm through summer, you should always be prepared for cold and wet conditions that can develop quickly. Wildflowers grow in abundance in early summer, particularly on the peaks and higher ridges.

## MAPS

Coverage of the walk is provided by the Spatial Vision 1:50 000 *Bogong Alpine Area* map.

## ACCESS

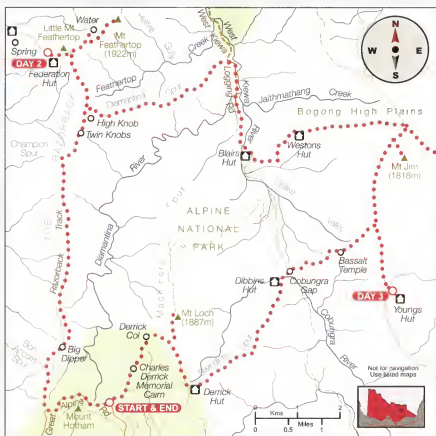
The small village of Harrietville (330 kilometres from Melbourne) is the closest settlement to the start of the walk. It can be reached by following the Hume Highway from Melbourne, then taking the Great Alpine Road through Bright to the upper Ovens Valley. The road continues beyond Harrietville for about 30 kilometres to Mt Hotham. One kilometre before entering the ski village you'll notice the Mt Loch car park off the north side of the road on a bare, windswept ridge adjacent to a snow-making pond. This is the start of the walk.

## SAFETY/WARNING

No campfires are permitted in the vicinity of Mt Feathertop or the Razorback, so

you must carry a fuel stove for cooking. A tent is also essential as the mountain huts are often full and should not be

relied upon. Be careful descending some of the spurs as they can be very steep.



*The author at Dibbins Hut, probably checking to see if he packed one of his children in the bottom of his rucksack.*



### The walk

Make sure you've got plenty of water as there are no water supply points until Mt Feathertop is reached, then warm up by walking west alongside the Great Alpine Road for two kilometres to reach the southern end of the Razorback. (Alternatively, you can reach the Razorback by walking over the summit of Mt Hotham. An even easier option, if you've got more than one vehicle, is to leave a car at the Mt Loch car park and drive to the head of the Razorback.) From here, follow the well-used track north to a prominent hill at the head of the Bon Accord Spur. (Before reaching this point, another track bypasses this hill to the east.) The main route descends steeply into a saddle known as the Big Dipper, where the bypass track joins the main track. The route now meanders on the eastern side of the Razorback for a while before returning to the ridgetop. The track then continues north, heading into the forest and eventually climbing above the treeline near the head of Champion Spur. The track meanders mostly along the crest of the ridge now, except near Twins Knobs and High Knob where it sidles to the west. North of High Knob you'll pass the signposted track to the Diamantina Spur

(part of the route on the second day) and about one kilometre further the track sidles to the northwest to reach a three-way junction in a saddle below Mt Little Feathertop (easily climbed from this point). Leave rucksacks here for the side-trip to the summit of Mt Feathertop. The summit route heads northeast from the saddle, keeping right a short distance away at another junction. (The track to the left leads to an excellent spring on the west face of Mt Feathertop, and continues on to the Northwest Spur and the dome-shaped Melbourne University Mountaineering Club [MUMC] Hut, visible to the north.) The track soon rejoins the crest of the Razorback before climbing steeply up an open scree slope to the narrow 1922-metre summit, where you will truly feel as if you're on top of the world. Return to your rucksacks and head west down the track to reach the pleasant camping area adjacent to Federation Hut. Water is available from a tank but fresh water can be obtained from the spring mentioned above.

### Day two

Retrace your steps along the Razorback to the track junction at the northern foot of High Knob, then bear east and follow

the path along the Diamantina Spur. The route soon descends quite steeply, then climbs over a hill before plummeting to the logging road beside the West Kiewa River. Proceed south along the West Kiewa Logging Road, soon crossing the Diamantina River. The road then climbs gently to a saddle about two kilometres beyond the base of Diamantina Spur. Though not obvious, a foot-track veers to the east side of the ridge at this point, away from the logging road, and descends to cross the West Kiewa River. On the far side you'll find Blairs Hut about 100 metres to the south. The hut dates from 1923, when the original hut was built on the site by cattleman Frank Blair (who grazed cattle in the Pretty Valley sector of the Bogong High Plains). The hut burnt down in 1930 but was rebuilt the following year. To reach Westons Hut follow an old vehicle track that climbs gently southeast from Blairs Hut. There is a confusion of old logging tracks criss-crossing this area, but following the route is not difficult as long as you remember to head uphill at the obvious track junctions. About 1.25 kilometres beyond Blairs Hut you'll cross a stream, where the route climbs considerably steeper and deteriorates





**Clockwise from above,** Veda's former coffee boy (and managing editor), Stephen Hamilton, with Mt Feathertop in the background. Looking towards Mt Hottam from the summit of Mt Feathertop. The very pretty Dibbills Falls, beside the Cabunga River.



into a foot track. The grade eases 2.5 kilometres from Blairs Hut and you will see Westons Hut (rebuilt in 2011) to your right as you reach a small grassy flat. The hut that stood here for over 60 years was one of the loveliest on the plains but, sadly, it was left a smouldering wreck by a large bushfire that swept through in the summer of 2006-7. If you need to top up your water supply, there is a spring on the track about 100 metres northeast of the hut. The track now follows a snowpole line through a forest of burnt snow gums. The route is not particularly obvious in places but it provides pleasant walking as it sidles the hillside. Once above the treeline,

the route leads to a high point atop the western edge of the Bogong High Plains. Shortly thereafter you'll reach a major four-way track junction. Turn south here and follow the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT), and its accompanying numbered snowpole line, across the vast plains. To the south you'll have noticed the strange flat-topped peak of Mt Jim, which is well worth climbing – the best place to leave the main route is near the snowpole numbered 317 and then walk to the summit across the open plains. The peak is crowned in basalt rock – a reminder of ancient volcanic activity – which has been known to play havoc with compass bearings.



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*The view of Mt Feathertop from Mt Loch.*

Back on the main route, continue south across the open plains to a track junction. The track to the right is the route for the third day, but bear left and descend gradually for two kilometres to Youngs Hut, situated at the head of a pretty valley. Water is close by and there is room for a number of tents.

### Day three

Return to the track junction above Youngs Hut and follow the AAWT southwest. The route descends into a shallow saddle before passing to the north of another rocky peak, Basalt Temple. While easily climbed and offering a good vantage point, Basalt Temple is covered in large boulders, some of which are quite unstable. Beyond this point the track dives steeply to Cobungra Gap, though there is the occasional enticing glimpse of the Cobungra River valley below. At Cobungra Gap, avoid the track heading north towards Blairs Hut, and follow instead the AAWT as it descends a short distance into the open valley of the upper Cobungra River. Cross the river on a bridge where Dibbins Hut will be seen a short distance upstream. There has been a succession of huts on this site since the early 1900s, when the Dibbin brothers, pastoralists from Freeburgh (near Bright), established a cattle-run in the area. A second hut was built on the site in 1917 and was affectionately known as the 'Creep Inn',

its low stature necessitating the need to crouch as you entered. This hut was slowly falling into disrepair and was replaced with the current hut in 1987. The river and valley here is a wonderful spot and one of my favourite places in the Victorian Alps. If it's hot, sit in the shade by the river and feel the soothing breeze as it wafts through the alpine grasses: you'll think you're in Heaven.

Being fully refreshed still won't fully prepare you for the very steep climb that ensues. Immediately after entering the forest east of the hut, the AAWT ascends Swindlers Spur at an exhausting angle. It's a relief to finally reach the crest of the spur, and an easier grade, after about an hour of climbing. Once on the crest, the walking is much easier as the route meanders to Derrick Hut, a solid structure built in memory of Charles Derrick (see below). Swindlers Spur makes a sharp turn to the northwest just after the hut and the AAWT soon climbs past the top of a ski lift to join a four-wheel drive management track. At this point you have the option of taking a short detour to Mt Loch. This recommended sojourn follows the four-wheel drive track north for about 750 metres to a point west of Mt Loch, where a side-track leads to the summit.

Back on the AAWT, follow the four-wheel drive track as it drops through Derrick Col to reach a hill adorned with a memorial cairn. This cairn was built in memory of

Charles Derrick, a cross-country skier who died here in 1965 while attempting to ski from Mt Bogong to Mt Hotham in one day. Leaving the cairn, you're now walking along the boundary of the Mt Hotham Alpine Resort, one of Victoria's largest ski resorts. The route continues south and one last climb will bring you to the snow-making pond and the end of the journey.

### WALK AT A GLANCE

**Distance:** 48 kilometres

**Time:** Three days

**Grade:** Moderate to difficult

**Type:** Mountain scenery, outstanding views

**Region:** Victorian Alps (southeast of Bright)

**Nearest town:** Harrietville

**Start/finish:** Mt Hotham

**Best time:** Late spring/summer/autumn

*Glenn van der Knijff grew up in the Victorian Alps where he developed a passion for bushwalking and skiing. These interests have taken him to North America, Europe and Nepal, but now he also enjoys travelling abroad with his wife and young family.*

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## HARE-WALLABIES: A CHILLING EXPOSÉ

*Dr Steve Van Dyck uncovers some nasty truths about one of our cutest marsupials*

Living with a hare-wallaby is like living with a hair-vest: the longer it's with you the more it rubs up the wrong way. This is because somewhere on the wallaby production-line good manners ran out long before this little bouncer was all sewn up. And for all the exquisite grace and delicacy that marks it physically as probably the most beautiful of all our wallabies, underneath simmers a hissing pressure-cooker of intolerance.

A long time ago one of these rarely-encountered leapers came my way as a leggy, kamikaze joey: a road-kill orphan determined to hop the twig early in life by spitting and spluttering its way through every bottle of milk my wife and I tried to sneak down its refluxing crawl.

It was a mystery to us whether it hated the flavour of its milkshakes less or more than it hated affection from us. But in spite of its toxic attitude, it survived and lived begrudgingly with us for about seven years, hawking up vile boluses of viscous digesta to quietly recycle, and lashing out at our gentle bull terrier whenever the warmest territory in front of the fire was encroached.

It was a spectacled hare-wallaby (*Lagorchestes conspicillatus*) which, when in full adult bloom, grows to the size of a lean

rabbit, but with longer, more slender hind feet and a pair of ginger monodes through which it suspiciously evaluates the world.

*Lagorchestes* is Greek for 'dancing hare', conveying not only an impression of size, fur texture and habits, but also alluding to the creature's tendency to slip into a fast fandango at the drop of a hat.

John Gould chose the scientific name after the day one of these wallabies dashed towards him through the long grass and,

but, like hares, lie until they are almost trodden on, when they rush away in wild hops and leaps, and at a very great rate of speed. The smaller kinds are therefore difficult to shoot, their many angular turns and twists making a steady aim impossible; and they must be knocked over with snap-shots.'

Snap shots indeed, but that's the origin of the word we now only associate with a camera. Sadly for hare-wallabies, the deadly

**'A long time ago one of these rarely-encountered leapers came my way as a leggy, kamikaze joey: a road-kill orphan determined to hop the twig early in life by spitting and spluttering its way through every bottle of milk my wife and I tried to sneak down its refluxing crawl.'**

when suddenly confronted by Gould (probably peering down the barrel of a shotgun), the little hopper launched itself into a long-jump that took it flying cleanly over the top of his head.

The hare-wallaby's erratic, dancing flight when flushed from shelter was quickly seized upon by 19th Century gentlemen who saw it as the next best thing to pheasants and grouse. Thomas Ward wrote in 1907: 'All alike are exceedingly timid;

combination of shotguns, introduced predators (cats, foxes, dingoes), livestock, habitat destruction and altered fire regimes has, appallingly, seen two of five once-common species become extinct, and two others wiped from the mainland to survive only on tiny West Australian islands. In fact, the only species of hare-wallaby you can still see today through a broad range of grasslands across northern Australia is the spectacled.





None of the hare-wallabies ever drank water and they always lived alone (hence the reprehensible social skills), while their leaping prowess was demonstrated more than once by our own truculent dancing hare (who lived inside the house and never went out).

At a time when scrub turkeys were proliferating exponentially around our place, our old tin roof took many an early morning battering as ravalling turkeys crash-landed, skidded and scrambled over it on their way down to the creek. For us, waking bolt upright with a thumping heart was bad enough, but for our poor hare-wallaby such point-blank explosions were always a cue to abandon ship and take to the air. Usually it would go mad and tear blindly around the inside of the house for about 20 laps, skidding and slipping on the lino, tearing up the carpet, knocking over its water (yes, this one drank!), leaping up the walls and bashing into furniture, before hiding behind the curtains panting and grinding its teeth.

Once, however, on a very early, cold, drizzling morning, a turkey with the weight and sense of an emu came hurtling through the ozone to clobber itself against the corrugations. Before it was even awake, the hare-wallaby was airborne on a

trajectory that took it orbiting past our bedroom door, out through the (open) kitchen window, and down into the big-bad world two metres below. From bed I clearly saw the thing shoot, chest-high, across the door space like a scorching football pass. As this led to one of the more overgrown, unfenced parts of our out-of-control yard I flew after it in hot pursuit (albeit by the back door). By the time I'd made it to the landing pad outside the kitchen window the wallaby had flown the coop. But while I was scratching around in the lantana I popped up to notice next door's horse swinging its head in a slow arc, watching something I couldn't see flying up the dirt road outside our place. So I clambered over the scrub and, sure enough, rocketing up the road was the hair-brained wallaby hell-bent on its tango from captivity.

By now it was raining harder and my things, the only footwear I'd had time to slip on, were greasy from the muddy road, slipping and shooting out from under me as I ran after the escapee like a staggering drunk. Neither of us were de Castellas, and before long we were knocked up; by the time I caught up to the wallaby on the crest of the hill, the poor gasping thing, unfit from a life of indoor, sluggish

*A spectacled hare-wallaby near Alpha in central Queensland. This shot was taken at night by spotlight, allowing the photographer to get close. Bruce Thomson*

indulgence, was so tired it was just bouncing up and down on the spot looking for inspiration.

It certainly found none in me; I was close to melt-down, but not before I made a pathetic lunge, barely managing to grab it by its fat tail. And so I slipped and cursed while it dangled hissing and panting all the way back to the house.

It wasn't until we were halfway home that the full impact of the morning's road-show sunk in. It dawned on me that in all the furore, things were in fact the only things I had put on for the mad dash.

As far as I know, only one burnt-out racehorse and a few red-faced turkeys witnessed that chilly dawn pas de deux, but I was just grateful to catch the animal in the end...I mean, imagine explaining the situation to the milkman without a hare-wallaby dangling from your fist.

*Dr Steve Van Dyck is the Senior Curator of Vertebrates at the Queensland Museum.*

# Women's Packs

Noelene Proud surveys women's rucksacks designed for multiday bushwalking



When I bought my first pack in the early 1990s, in a sea of packs primarily designed for men, I couldn't find one with a short enough back length. I ended up buying a pack that didn't fit me well. It always listed to the side like a slowly sinking ship, no matter where I packed my sleeping bag ballast. The sternum strap struggled to pull the way-too-wide shoulder straps in. Despite the problems, it saw me through a lot of walking before being scuttled when packs designed for female bodies came on to the market. This survey looks at packs designed or suitable for women for multiday walking in Australian conditions. Our different body shape and often shorter torsos mean women have different fitting requirements to men. Women's packs are designed to fit curvier hips, narrower shoulders and breasts that do not take kindly to being squashed

by a sternum strap. When looking at packs, first determine the capacity and must-have features. Now try on packs that meet these criteria to find one that is comfortable and fits well.

## VOLUME

Give some thought to the bushwalks the pack will be used on and aim to buy a pack big enough for your gear to fit on the inside. Arriving at camp in torrential rain is no time to discover the tent poles are missing, having not been securely strapped to the outside. I have been on more than one bushy footpad where torn off bits of blue foam mat marked the way. Factor in space for any group gear you may carry if regularly walking with friends. A pack that extends with a long throat can be useful for the occasional longer walk.

*A well-fitted pack will also improve your balance; Chuin Nee Ooi crossing a flooded stream in New Zealand. Dave Noble*

## WEIGHT

Consider a pack's weight and its ability to carry the load comfortably and efficiently. This is not always (but could be) the lightest pack. A padded, comfortable, well-fitting harness can weigh more than an ultralight harness but carry a load more comfortably, leaving the bushwalker less fatigued at the end of the day.

## DURABILITY AND WATER RESISTANCE

Walking off-track, pushing through scrub and pack hauling over rough rocks take a toll on the fabric of a pack. Netting, often used to make pockets and places to stash

gear on the outside, is easily caught and ripped on vegetation. If all your walking is on track or in very open country a lighter, less durable fabric may be adequate. Very few packs are truly waterproof so factor in using a pack liner or cover, even for more weather-resistant packs.

## FEATURES

Do you need ice axe loops and snowboard attachments or will walking pole attachments be more useful? A hydration port is a very handy feature if you use a bladder. Pack lids that detach and form bumbags are useful if you plan a short walk from camp or to carry your water, snacks and camera up the peak. I find pockets on hip-belts (for lip balm, sunscreen, cashews) very useful, but check any pockets are reachable: some are a long way around to the side and inaccessible while wearing the pack. Try only to buy the features you need: each zip, pocket, bell and whistle is adding weight to the pack.

## COMFORT AND FIT

A well-fitting pack can be the difference between loving the freedom and adventure of a bushwalk or enduring a hard slog. Any pack will feel comfortable in the outdoor store if it is empty or stuffed with plastic bags. Get some weight in it and have the harness adjusted. (Often this is better done by an experienced pack fitter who can view it from the side). Comfort depends on the harness fitting (depending on body shape and personal preferences, this could be a pack designed for men), being correctly fine-tuned and the load optimally packed. Comfort and fit varies dramatically among different people for the same or similar packs. One of my current favourite packs was far from a favourite with the author of the pack survey in the last issue of *Wild*.

## TORSO LENGTH

A pack needs to be the correct torso length to fit well: if the pack is too long the load rides too low and the weight falls on the shoulders, too short and the weight may not be carried on the hips (torso length is distinct from height). Many women have shorter torsos than men and some

women-specific packs offer very short back lengths. (To determine your torso length, simultaneously marshal a friend and a flexible tape measure. Stand with hands on your hips, flat against your pelvic bone, thumbs pointing backwards and ask the friend to measure from the prominent vertebrae at the base of your neck, running the tape measure along your body, to where the imaginary line connecting your thumbs intersects the spine. A quick Google will turn up a number of videos and guidelines demonstrating how to measure torso length and fit a pack.) Many packs, brochures and brand websites state the torso length range for a pack. Be equipped with your torso length and try on the appropriate packs.

## HIP-BELTS

Most women have fuller, more rounded hips than men so women-specific packs have hip-belts that are flared to conform to our curves. The resulting snug fit is important because the hip-belt takes much of the weight being carried. With weight in the pack, adjust the load lifters (at shoulders) to take most of the weight off the top of your shoulders and ensure most of the weight can be carried comfortably on the hips.

Many women also have more prominent pelvic bones than men, so a well-padded hip-belt can make the pack more comfortable. Some brands of packs offer interchangeable hip-belts and shoulder harnesses to create more options for fitting.

## STRAPS

On the whole women have narrower shoulders than men. Women-specific packs feature shoulder straps set closer together and straps that are narrower and contoured to curve inwards so they do not end up in one's armpits. Well-padded shoulder straps generally provide more comfort for heavy loads, although check the edges are padded or comfortable as well. Most women need a sternum strap that can adjust up and down the shoulder straps to a position that is both comfortable (non-breast squashing) and functional (low enough to not choke yet take some weight off the shoulders).



**DEUTER AIRCONTACT SL**  
(60+10 LITRES) RRP \$360

This pack will suit those preferring a longer, narrower pack. The top of the pack has an indent allowing your head space to move. The hip-belt is wide and well-padded and cinches the load on to the hips very well, using a buckle that tightens easily. The back length is a stepped adjustment and two sets of buckles allow the load lifters to be placed in the best place for back length. Padding keeps the pack away from your back, providing both comfort and ventilation. It also has daisy chains for attaching gear and a rain cover, which can be detached and left at home in fine weather. The hip-belt has a big, handy pocket and there are hydration ports each side. The downside is its weight (2.65 kilograms), but it carries a heavy load well. It comes in one size. [deuter.com](http://deuter.com)



**NORTH FACE LA LOBA 60  
(60 LITRES) RRP \$450**

The La Loba is a good pack for those that like to be super-organised and have a pocket for everything. The main bag can be made into one or two compartments, the stretchy pocket on the outside (with a drainage hole for wet jackets) holds stacks, and a long zip provides access from the front into the main bag (works well if you use a pack cover or stuff sacks rather than a pack liner). The pockets on the hip-belt (one large enough for a point and shoot) keep all the essentials at hand without taking the pack off. The lid detaches to become a lumbar pack. The harness is easy to adjust and comfortable, with a fair bit of pivot in the hip-belt and a sternum strap that slides up and down then stays in place when the best position is found. It is available in two sizes and weighs 2.34 kilograms. [thenorthface.com.au](http://thenorthface.com.au)

**TATONKA YUKON LIGHT  
(60 LITRES) RRP \$250**

The Yukon Light comes in one size but offers a lot of adjustability for a wide range of torso lengths. The stepped adjustment moves the shoulder straps to change back length and two sets of buckles are available to set the load lifters in the most appropriate place. The harness is comfortable, well padded, covered in mesh to increase ventilation and carries a load well. A zipped divider is used to create one compartment or two in the main sack. Deep mesh pockets on each side keep items at hand while walking. The bellows on the deep lid pocket stops small items rolling down the hill, and a daisy chain on the outside of the pack offers many options for clipping and lashing gear on. As well as the standard haul loop on the back of the pack, a second sturdy haul loop on the front of pack will make pack passing and hauling easier. It weighs 2.23 kilograms. [tatonka.com](http://tatonka.com)



**KATHMANDU VARD0 GRIDTECH  
PACK (70 LITRES) RRP \$550**

The harness on this large pack has numerous options for adjustments, including the choice between two back lengths, interchangeable shoulder straps and hip-belt (and the flare of the hip-belt is adjustable, nice touch). The dual-compartment main bag is separated into two (or not) by a drawstring divider that simply but cleverly conforms to the shape of the load in each compartment. The pack has a very deep pocket on the outside for stashing all kinds of gear. The lid clips off and can be used as a daypack (complete with minimalist straps), although the lid floats around a bit if the pack is not full (not a problem in fine weather, when using a pack cover or if regularly stashing bulky items under the lid). The zipped net bag inside the lid pocket is perfect for keeping small essentials at hand. With a long throat this is a good choice for bulky loads and for carrying a heavy load well. It weighs 2.4 kilograms and is available in two sizes. [kathmandu.com.au](http://kathmandu.com.au)



**MACPAC ESPRIT FL  
(65 LITRES) RRP \$580**

This durable, weather-resistant pack has many features, including deep zip-shut side pockets (no losing stuff when bending over to tie a bootlace), shock cord for cinching overflow gear firmly to the outside, easy to adjust compression straps and glove friendly zip pulls. The long throat provides room for extra gear on a long trip. A zipped divider is used to create one or two main compartments and the hip-belt has an attachment point for a pocket or bag. The harness is well padded and simple to adjust, with the shoulder straps sliding on staves and allowing precision fitting. The hip-belt is tightened by pulling outward rather than inward, but a good tight adjustment is possible by pulling one strap at a time with two hands. This is an ideal pack for bushwalkers that want to carry a heavy load comfortably and prefer extra features to saving weight. It comes in two sizes and weighs 2.6 kilograms. [macpac.com.au](http://macpac.com.au)

**OSPREY ARIEL 65  
(65 LITRES) RRP \$300**

The Ariel offers a choice of four back lengths, interchangeable shoulder straps (shaped to fit female bodies) and a (interchangeable) hip-belt moulded to each wearer's shape (done in-store in a little oven), to ensure a snug fit. The result is a harness tailored to fit well, carrying the load efficiently and in comfort. An indent in the top of the pack leaves room for your head to move back. The main compartment (one or two spaces) can be accessed from the front and the removable lid doubles as a lumbar pack for side trips up a peak. Trekking poles can be secured to the shoulder straps and pack, allowing access or stowing without taking the pack off. Two hydration ports and a mesh back for ventilation are further features on a pack that is very good value for money. It weighs in at 2.32 kilograms. [ospreypacks.com](http://ospreypacks.com)



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**ONE PLANET WBA  
(60 LITRES) RRP \$400**

This single compartment canvas pack is a very well-thought-out piece of equipment. There are not many extras but it has everything most walkers need, especially a comfortable harness. Available in two sizes and with interchangeable hip-belts, this pack is at the lighter end of the weight range yet carries a heavy load well. The torso length adjustment is effective and easy to use; you just pull on straps on the hip-belt, locking them when the best position is found. The pack can also be adjusted while being worn. The single closure uses a super-tough aluminium buckle and cinches the lid down tight. Tucked into the gap between the hip-belt and pack are two deep waterbottle holsters. The key lanyard is large enough for keys, pocket knife and other stuff. This is a great pack for those wanting all the features in the harness without carrying extra weight in superfluous pockets, zips and ice axe loops. It is available in two sizes and weighs 1.88 kilograms. [oneplanet.com.au](http://oneplanet.com.au)

**BLACK DIAMOND INNOVA  
(60 LITRES) RRP \$300**

The Innova is a very impressive pack. The torso length adjusts with an Allen key, allowing easy and precise adjustment. The harness overall is very comfortable, especially the pivot on the hip-belt: the belt moves with the walker, leaving little possibility of rubbing or discomfort while carrying the load on the hips. The main sack is single compartment and a large, stretchy pocket on the outside will hold a lot of the gear you need handy during the day. The hip-belt has one pocket and the hydration port is in the middle, so both lefties and righties will be happy. I would have liked an indent for my head when craning around enjoying the view and the haul loop is a little tucked away under the lid, but these are minor gripes about a great pack that is the lightest in the survey (1.74 kilograms) and at the lower end of the price range. It comes in a small and medium size.

[blackdiamondequipment.com.au](http://blackdiamondequipment.com.au)



MANUFACTURER AND MODEL	CAPACITY, LITRES	MAIN MATERIAL	LISTED WEIGHT, GRAMS	NUMBER OF COMPARTMENTS	AVAILABLE BACK LENGTHS	APPROX PRICE, \$
Black Diamond Innova 60	60	Synthetic	1740	1	S and M	300
Deuter Aircontact 60+10 SL	70	Synthetic	2660	2	One size	360
Kathmandu Vardo gndTECH Pack	70	Synthetic	2400	2	Size 1 and 2	550
Macpac Esprit 65FL	65 (W2), 70 (W3)	Canvas	2600	2	W2 and W3	580
North Face La Loba 60	55 (S), 60 (M)	Synthetic	2340	2	S and M	450
One Planet WBA	55 (S), 60 (M)	Canvas	1880	1	S and M	400
Osprey Ariel 65	65	Synthetic	2320	2	XS, S, M, L	300
Tatonka Yukon Light	60	Synthetic	2230	2	One size	250



*A pack would be useful for carrying that large billy; four women with walking sticks walking in the bush near the Hermitage, Narbethong, Victoria. May 1913 by J.W. Lindt (original copy owned by the National Library of Australia. nla.pic-vn4699546)*

Walking gear for women has come a long way since we set out in long, voluminous skirts, corsets, flouncy blouses and hats wide enough to snag on every shrub.

First on the market were women-specific bushwalking clothes and jackets and, fortunately, these have been joined by other equipment designed for women. This is a smart move by manufacturers. A 2010 Australian Bureau of Statistics report revealed almost identical rates of participation between the sexes for bushwalking in Australia (2.4 per cent of men and 2.3 per cent of women for the statistically minded). Indeed, nearly half of *Wild's* readers are female.

A 2010 Australian Bureau of Statistics report revealed almost identical rates of participation between the sexes for bushwalking in Australia (2.4 per cent of men and 2.3 per cent of women for the statistically minded). Indeed, nearly half of *Wild's* readers are female. Much women-specific gear starts at the bottom, with a vast array of shoes, boots and socks tailored to the characteristics of female feet. Women (generally) have shorter, narrower, lower volume, more flexible feet than men, with a higher instep. Women's footwear is often designed to carry a lower body weight, resulting in a lighter boot.

As many of us sleep colder than men, it is not surprising sleeping bags and mats for women are designed to be extra warm. Women-specific bags and sleeping mats have extra fill or insulation in the torso and foot to keep us warmer. Like packs,

sleeping bags for women have less room in the shoulders and more in the hips. Sleeping bags are increasingly available in a variety of lengths, allowing us to choose a bag that keeps us warmer (less unfilled space) as well as weighing and packing less. Although not specifically designed for women, the availability of shorter bivvies is a bonus for gram-counting, vertically-challenged females like myself.

Trekking poles designed for women have smaller grips and options for shorter lengths. Possibly the most 'women-specific' gear are 'urination devices' that allow us to pee standing up, discreetly and with minimum hitching up and down of clothes if cold or wet (and very handy if wearing a climbing harness). This is definitely something to practice at home first. Even if you don't use one you have to love some of the product names: Shee pee, Whizz free, Go girl and the intriguing 'She-wee Extreme'.

Noelene Proud has carried packs on bushwalks and travels in Western Australia, other states and further afield. Her current favourite pack has just returned from canyoning in Kanjini and is now being stuffed with food for a week-long wintery coastal walk in the Southwest.

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move up a **gear** and win...



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[rrwillis@internode.on.net](mailto:rrwillis@internode.on.net)

Fax 08 8985 2355



## Wild Diary

### July

**Tough Bloke Challenge M**  
2 July, NSW  
[maxadventure.com.au](http://maxadventure.com.au)

**Salomon Trail Running Series BR**  
3 July, Vic  
[rapidascend.com.au](http://rapidascend.com.au)

**AUMC 12/24 hr R**  
16-17 July, SA  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**8 hr R**  
23 July, Vic  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Bush Capital Bush Marathon Festival BR**  
30 July, ACT  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

**Salomon Trail Running Series BR**  
31 July, Vic  
[rapidascend.com.au](http://rapidascend.com.au)

**August**  
**Kathmandu Adventure Sprint M**  
6-7 August, NSW  
[maxadventure.com.au](http://maxadventure.com.au)

**Ben Lomond Descent P**  
7 August, Tas  
[tamar.canoe.org.au](http://tamar.canoe.org.au)

**Lake Macquarie 6/12 hr R**  
13 August, NSW  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**State Championships and Spring 24 hr R**  
13-14 August, WA  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Metrogaine 5 hr, R**  
21 August, ACT  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Salomon Trail Running Series BR**  
28 August, Vic  
[rapidascend.com.au](http://rapidascend.com.au)

**September**  
**State Championships 24 hr R**  
3-4 September, Old  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Spring 6/12 hr R**  
10 September, SA  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**State Championships 24 hr R**  
10-11 September, NT  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**State Championships 15/24 hr R**  
17-18 September, NSW  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Nightgaine 5 hr R**  
24 September, ACT  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Kathmandu Max12/24 M**  
24-25 September, NSW  
[maxadventure.com.au](http://maxadventure.com.au)

**October**  
**Bush Rogaine 6 hr R**  
8 October, NT  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**3/6/10 hr R**  
8 October, Old  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Spring 12 hr R**  
15 October, WA  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Metrogaine R**  
15 October, Old  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Spring 6/12 hr R**  
15 October, ACT  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**November**  
**Kathmandu Adventure Series M**  
5 November, Vic  
[maxadventure.com.au](http://maxadventure.com.au)

**Anaconda Adventure Series M**  
6 November, Old  
[rapidascend.com.au](http://rapidascend.com.au)

**Great North Walk BR**  
12 November, NSW  
[coolrunning.com.au](http://coolrunning.com.au)

**Tasmanian Championships R**  
12-13 November, Tas  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

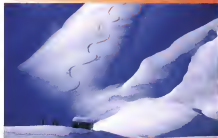
**Socialgaine 6 hr R**  
20 November, NSW  
[rogaine.asn.au](http://rogaine.asn.au)

**Activities:**  
BR bush running  
M multiports  
P paddling  
O orienteering  
R rogaine

Rogaine events are organised by the State rogaine associations. Canoeing events are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated.

Wild Diary listings provide information about wilderness events. Send items for publication to [ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au](mailto:ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au)

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## The End of the World Tent

Given recent predictions for the End of Days, when the Rapture does come and (God forbid), you are not sucked up to heaven, then in the coming time of chaos and collapse the **Epoch tent** from **Mont** may be heaven sent. The freestanding, four-season Epoch is definitely designed for the End of Days, with its six-pole super-strong structure providing incredible stability in high winds – Mont's testing showed the addition of a ridgepole increased overall stability by 40 per cent. The Epoch is a large two-person, dual entrance-vestibule design, utilising Dac poles, a PU laminated floor rated to 10 000 millimetre waterhead and a PU coated seam-sealed fly made from 40 denier Sil-nylon and rated to 2000 millimetre waterhead. It features three large vents to control condensation, multidirectional three-point reflective guys, a combination pole sleeve and clip system, gear loft and four internal pockets. Finally, if you have to lug your tent through gathering plagues of locusts and the painful darkness, the Epoch weighs an impressive 3.55 kilograms, which includes 16 J-stakes. It retails for \$799. [mont.com.au](http://mont.com.au)



## Light at the End

With all this talk of painful darkness and biblical floods you are going to need a good waterproof headtorch for the End of Days. Enter the **Black Diamond Storm**, a new fully waterproof headtorch that is submersible for 30 minutes in one metre of water. It comes packaged up with a single blinding 100 lumen triple power LED, two white single-power LEDs and two red single-power LEDs (for maintaining your night vision). The **Storm** has multiple dimming/power levels, a battery power indicator, and, perhaps most usefully of all, it also includes a lock switch to prevent it from turning on inside your pack and draining the battery of power for when you really need it: like when the rivers and fountains of blood arrive and your first born is struck (if you are unlucky enough to have one). It weighs 110 grams and retails for \$99.95. [blackdiamondequipment.com](http://blackdiamondequipment.com)



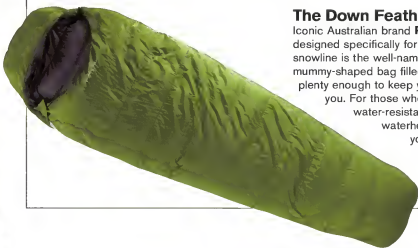
## Soft Racks

Everyone loves a neat way to carry their water craft and the **Sea to Summit Solution Traveller Soft Racks** fit the bill nicely. Designed as a quick and easy way to transport your kayak, these clever aerodynamic racks feature a simple three-step quick fit system, grippy base and top foam that reduces the movement of the kayak to provide a more secure load, as well as a very strong removable daisy chain that provides multiple tie down points. The racks are available in two sizes, standard and large, with the large being suitable for large canoes or double-stacking craft. The standard retails for \$99.95, while the large is \$129.95. [seatosummit.com.au](http://seatosummit.com.au)



## The Down Feathertop

Iconic Australian brand **Paddy Pallin** has a new range of sleeping bags designed specifically for Australian conditions. Perfect for time spent above the snowline is the well-named top of the range (almost literally) **Feathertop 900**, a mummy-shaped bag filled with 900 grams of 750+ loft white goose down – plenty enough to keep you warm and snug in the worst the Alps can throw at you. For those who like to sleep out under the stars, it comes with a water-resistant polyurethane outer that has a 10 000 millimetre waterhead (although it is not seam-sealed), that will protect you from light rain or a heavy dew. The Feathertop is available in a left or right zip, and the bags can be zipped together if you get two. It is rated to approximately -15°C, weighs in at 1.64 kilograms and retails for \$699.95. [paddypallin.com.au](http://paddypallin.com.au)



## Touch Wood

While it may not be radically new, in fact it may be a throwback to an earlier era, the **Wenger Evowood \$557 pocket knife** is definitely a slick looking bit of kit. Rather than your bog-standard plastic jobbie, the Evowood is housed in Swiss walnut, which is a lot like Australian walnut only with less personality. Apparently the wood used would otherwise be discarded, so not only is it handsome, it is also environmentally friendly. Tools wise this little knife has the standard knife blade, wood saw, scissors, pliers, universal wrench, screwdrivers, can opener, corkscrew, reamer/awl, nail file/cleaner and a key ring. It retails for \$139.95. To find the nearest stockist visit [wenger.com.au](http://wenger.com.au)



## Imap

iPhone lovers – seemingly everyone these days – will be pleased to hear that **Hema's** extensive range of outback **four-wheel drive maps** are now available for iPhones and iPads. All you have to do is download the free **Memory-Map** software on to your iPhone/iPad, which gives you access to the Digital Map Store, and then you are away – you can purchase the maps you require for whatever trip you are planning. Once downloaded the maps can be used on or offline. The maps have a free ten-day trial period, beyond which you have to purchase the right to continue using them, but it allows you to get a good feeling for the usefulness of the maps before you purchase. The price for a Mobile Only Licence for one region (Hema offers maps to four major regions) is **US\$24.95** (around **A\$23.50**). To find out more visit [memory-map.com.au](http://memory-map.com.au)



## Safe Drinking Water at the End of the World

The media release for the new **SteriPEN Sidewinder** says 'Perfect for Emergency use – be prepared for cyclones, floods, water line breaks and other disasters that disrupt your drinking water supply.' Bizarrely, there is no mention of the End of Days, but we all know that safe drinking water is almost more important than anything in a disaster. Enter the Sidewinder, the world's first batteryless **UV water treatment system**. Instead of a battery the Sidewinder uses a hand-crank to power up the UV lamp, which will kill waterborne bacteria, viruses and protozoa such as giardia and cryptosporidium. The Sidewinder will treat up to 8000 litres of water at around 90 seconds per litre. Included in the system are a one-litre Tritan BPA-free bottle and SteriPEN Pre-Filter for use prior to treatment if the water contains floaties. The Sidewinder weighs 471 grams and retails for \$139.95. Bring on the end of the world we say. [seatosummit.com.au](http://seatosummit.com.au)



## Destination Water

Since we once crawled out from the oceans perhaps it made sense for **Platypus** to call its new series of **hydration packs the Origin series**. These packs, which come in a series of cargo sizes from three litres to 32 litres, all utilise the Big Zip SL at their core. Made from welded, waterproof fabrics that have a 10 000 millimetre waterhead, weatherproof zips and heat taped seams, the range is designed with very clean simple lines and includes lots of nice little extra features that make them all the more usable, from the BioCurve back panels to the multiple hose-routing options. The series comes in five sizes: three litres, five litres, nine litres, 22 litres and 32 litres, and all – except for the Origin 32, which has a three-litre bladder – are sold with a two-litre Big Zip SL. They retail from \$139.95 upwards. To find out more visit [spelean.com.au](http://spelean.com.au)



## Cooking with... all the implements

For the outdoor chef who is weight conscious but likes to have it all comes the **MSR Alpine Kitchen Set**. Wrapped in its 'burrito-style' lightweight cover is a folding utensil set that includes a folding spoon, spatula and grater (doubling as a strainer). It also includes a pack cloth, flexible cutting board and two squeeze bottles. According to the Cascade Designs website the whole set weighs 294.2 grams, but don't let the extra 0.2 grams above 294 grams put you off, it doesn't make that much of a difference. It retails for \$69.95. [spelean.com.au](http://spelean.com.au)



## Trek the Light Fantastic

**Exped** has a new lightweight trekking and walking **rucksack** out called the **Backcountry 55**. As you would guess, it is a 55-litre pack, with a nice clean design that should appeal to the Australian market (where we have lots of scrub). It has some sweet design features including the alloy Rapide Hooks, which are used to secure the lid and also the compression straps – they look strong and simple to use. The Rapide Hooks secure on to two daisy chains on the back, which can also be used to secure other external items like trekking poles or ice axes. The pack is virtually waterproof with a roll-top opening to the main compartment, while the 420 denier PU treated nylon is completely seam-sealed. The Backcountry 55 weighs 1.4 kilograms and comes in three sizes, small, medium and large. It retails for \$359.95, while there is a 65 litre version available for \$389.95. To find out more contact [sales@expeditionequipment.com.au](mailto:sales@expeditionequipment.com.au)







### THE BIBBULMUN TRACK: ITS HISTORY, ITS BEAUTY, ITS WALKERS

BY JIM BAKER (JIM BAKER, 2010, RRP \$27.50 PLUS POSTAGE, BIBBULMUNTRACK.ORG.AU)

Seasoned end-to-end Bibbulmun Track walker and long-time volunteer with the not-for-profit Bibbulmun Track Foundation Jim Baker has written an informative and entertaining read about the Bibbulmun Track, a 963 kilometre walking track in southern Western Australia.

The book recounts the roles of government and community in creating, developing and maintaining the track. The author also takes the reader on a vicarious end-to-end,

describing the usual track day, staying in shelters and the changing landscape from Kalamunda to Albany. Information on history, wildlife and wildflowers is included.

The tone is warm and positive and the book is well illustrated with a generous number of colour photos. Complementing the track guides, this book is inspiration and information for both prospective and experienced track walkers. It is also of interest to those involved in community participation in long-distance walking tracks. Although about one specific track, this is also a book about the simple pleasure of bushwalking.

Noelene Proud



### DAYWALKS AROUND VICTORIA

BY GLENN TEMPEST (OPEN SPACES PUBLISHING, 2011, RRP \$29.95, OSP.COM.AU)

If guides were judged on looks alone this walking guide to 36 day walks around Victoria would be a supermodel. *Daywalks Around Victoria* is beautifully illustrated with superb images and a stylish layout that makes it a joy to flick through.

The descriptions are clear and concise, the maps are good, it has elevation profiles, while most importantly, the choice of walks is excellent, ranging from long-standing

classics in the Grampians and the High Country to new walks in relatively unknown areas like the Pyrite Range (which is ridiculously close to Melbourne).

It also has some nice added extras, as each described walk is available as a free download from [osp.com.au](http://osp.com.au) (where you can also find updates on track changes or closures), as either a GPX file for use in a hand-held GPS device, or as a KMZ file that can be opened directly in Google Earth. Visually, this book sets a new standard for walking guides in Australia.

Ross Taylor



### BEST BUSH, RIVER & HILL WALKS AROUND KOSCIUSZKO

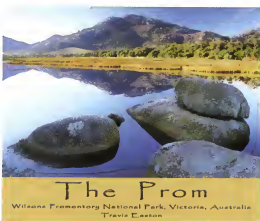
BY MATT MCCLELLAND AND THE WILDWALKS TEAM (WOODSLANE PRESS, 2010, RRP \$29.95, TRAVELANDOUTDOOR.BOOKCENTRE.COM.AU)

This is the first walking guide I've come across that's marketed (primarily) for those interested in day walks. Forty walks are detailed – many of them a half-day in duration – ranging from 400 metres to 23 kilometres in length, and each walk is supported by a simple map. A few longer overnight walks have been included as well as a section on suggested winter tours for those walkers keen to swap walking boots for snowshoes. The guide is further

enhanced through the use of boxes that contain tidbits on such topics as huts, the environment and side-trips.

The 250-page guide is printed in full colour and there are hundreds of images throughout, but the book would have benefited by having less images of trivial things such as duckboards, signposts and picnic tables, and having more stunning landscape images. That said, this book will be a handy tool for the many visitors to Kosciuszko National Park – from families and less-active sightseers to experienced walkers – who are interested in the stunning scenery the park has to offer.

Glenn van der Knijff



### THE PROM

BY TRAVIS EASTON (TRAVIS EASTON LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY, 2010, RRP \$24.95, TELP.COM.AU)

For some reason particular wild places often lodge themselves deep in our hearts, becoming places that we return to time and time again, their charms deepening with each visit and never growing tired. For long-time *Wild* contributor and photographer, Travis Easton, Wilsons Promontory is clearly one of these places and in his new book, *The Prom*, this love of place is openly on display through a fine selection of superb images and short sections of text that describe the various sections of the park. The book features a broad array of landscape images as well as photos of local fauna and flora, and includes an inspiring introduction by Graeme Wheeler from his book *Walk the Timeless Land*. For others who have fallen under the spell of Victoria's oldest national park, *The Prom* will bring you great pleasure, and will almost certainly pique your interest to explore new areas of the park. RT

# Directories

**Wild Directories are the comprehensive reference point for Australasian outdoors-related businesses. For only \$48 (\$58 in spot red) an issue you can have your business listed here and reach a worldwide audience. Wild Directories - gateway to Australia's outdoors.**

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# John Chapman

I was originally interested in rock climbing, but due to a lack of climbing partners in Geelong where I was studying, I was introduced to walking. On my first trip we got flooded and it was a bit of an epic, but I had a fantastic time and it was a great introduction.

It wasn't long before I made my first trip to Tasmania and did the Overland Track, and shortly afterwards I did my first solo walk in the Southwest. I was 19 at the time and really got the outdoor bug, spending as much time as I could walking, climbing and paddling. I stayed in Geelong for two years where I formed what is now known as the Deakin University Bushwalking club before moving to Melbourne University. I was converting my diploma into a degree and basically spent two years learning nothing new, so I used that time to get into the bush.

I joined the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club and spent most of my free time over the next ten years climbing, canoeing and walking. My interests still lay with climbing and I climbed with a lot of different people during that time putting up new routes at Mt Arapiles and the Grampians.

I was also doing a lot of canoeing at the time, but after a while I decided that I had to choose one activity and stick to that. I often struggled with climbing fitness after 20 days of walking and the next step for me in paddling was to start running grade five rapids, which are just downright dangerous, so I chose to spend my time walking.

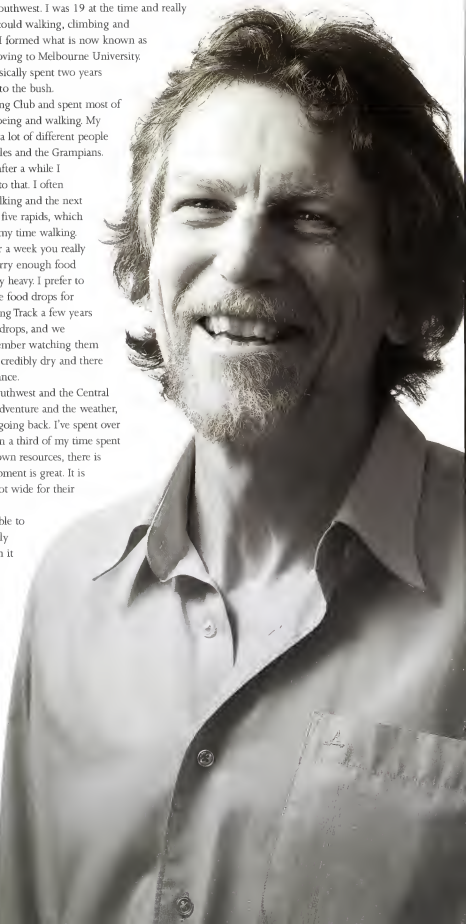
I have always been attracted to longer trips. After a week you really get into the swing of things. I once managed to carry enough food for 24 days, but that was a bit much, it was awfully heavy. I prefer to carry about two week's worth of food and organise food drops for trips longer than that. I did the entire Alpine Walking Track a few years ago: that was 51 days straight through with a few drops, and we finished just before big fires swept the area. I remember watching them try so hard to put them out, but everything was incredibly dry and there was so much lightning that they didn't stand a chance.

There is something about Tassie especially the Southwest and the Central Plateau. It always draws me back, the scenery, the adventure and the weather, everything really. It's the wilderness that keeps me going back. I've spent over 900 days walking in Tassie now, which is more than a third of my time spent walking. You go in there and have to rely on your own resources, there is nobody else to fall back on, and the lack of development is great. It is very different to other areas that have tracks five foot wide for their entire length. It is meant to be wilderness after all.

The guidebooks are good fun. It is great to be able to make a living from walking and not have to actually guide folk. All my walking is personal, we just turn it into a book afterwards. We don't make a lot of money from the guides, but I think that the information and knowledge we have should be shared with people.

We still get out regularly with a number of day walks planned and some longer trips too. My next trip is back to Tassie where we will be doing the Overland Track in winter. This will be my third winter crossing, the first one was solo. I think I will be back there again around Christmas spending about ten days doing day walks for a new guide, followed by another longer trip into the Southwest.

Interview and photo Craig Ingram



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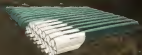
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